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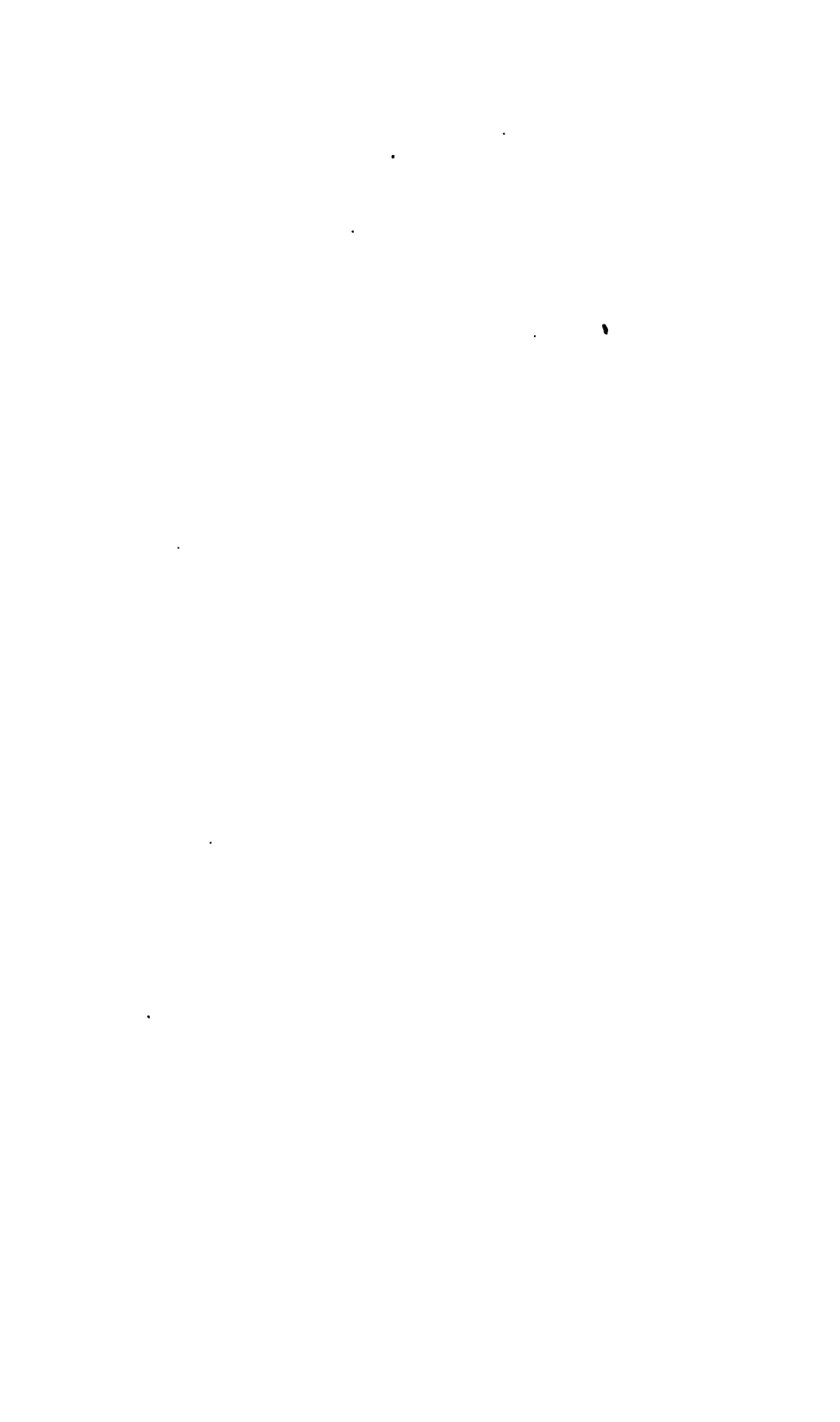
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# THE JACQUERIE.

A NOVEL.

BY

G. P. R. JAMES, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

"THE GIPSY," "THE ANCIENT REGIME," "THE GENTLEMAN OF  
THE OLD SCHOOL," ETC., ETC., ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

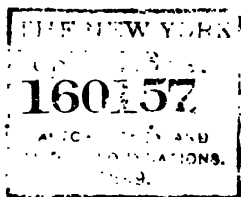
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1842.



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# THE JACQUERIE.

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## CHAPTER I.

**EVEN** in the middle of the fourteenth century the tint of age had overspread the vast old church of St. Peter of Montvoye, some twenty miles from Tours. The stone, which had once been light gray, was stained with many a dingy colour, and the sharp cutting of the mason's chisel had been rounded away by the obliterating hand of time. Indeed, so tall and shadowy was the building, that although, in its first newness, the exterior might have appeared bright and shining amid the green woods that covered the surrounding country, the interior never could have given the spectator the idea of freshness, but in its dim obscurity must have looked old even from the first. It had been built in that style mistakenly called Norman, but at a period when the round arch was gradually declining, and the long lancet-shaped window, the lofty column, and the horseshoe arch were occasionally used. The lighter forms, indeed, of a later period were not there to be seen; and all was heavy, massive, and stern, scarcely relieved by the many mouldings and rich ornaments of the arches, and the quaint and ever-varying decorations of the capitals. The tall windows afforded but a faint and uncertain light, except when the full sunshine of the summer poured at noon through the arch of the southern transept, and even then the stained glass softened and saddened the blaze, giving a sort of unearthly hue to the rays as they fell upon the checkered pavement. Round the chancel ran two dark side aisles, which received none but wandering beams, that found their way thither from the body of the church, except indeed, when one of the small, low-arched doors, that led into the cloisters of the neighbouring abbey, opened, and the daylight for a few moments streamed in, displaying the figure of a priest or monk, and casting his long shadow upon the floor.

In this church, one evening in the autumn of the year.

1357, just when the light was growing faint, ere the going down of the sun left all in darkness, was a tall, handsome young man, of four or five-and-twenty years of age, with his arms crossed upon his bosom, and his eye bent down upon the ground. The dark aisle of the transept in which he stood was too shadowy for any one to have distinguished his features, or their expression, had there been other people in the church; but he was quite alone. Neither priest appeared at the altar, nor penitent in the confessional; and the flickering of a faint lamp before one of the shrines was the only thing that looked like life within the walls of the building.

Though no one saw his features, it may be necessary that the reader should see them with the eye of imagination, and also requisite that he should mark the peculiar expression which those features wore. The lines were all good, except perhaps about the mouth, where a certain heavy fulness of the lips took away all beauty from that part of the face. The forehead was broad and capacious, though not remarkably high; the brow strongly marked, but finely shaped; the eyes large, sparkling, and full of thoughtful meaning; the nose small, but beautifully cut; and the chin perhaps a little more prominent than is exactly symmetrical, but still rounded into that form which the Grecian chisel was delighted to display. The hair and beard, which were all short, were of a rich brown colour, and curled about the face in many a graceful sweep; but the form of the head was in itself remarkable, being nearly spherical, though there certainly did appear a degree of fulness behind the ears and at the back of the skull which diminished the beauty of the whole.

Could anybody have watched the expression which the countenance we have described wore at that moment, he might have been more puzzled than ever he was in life before to interpret the meaning of what was written on that page. Dark and stern it certainly was; but, at the same time, there was a mingling of scorn, and melancholy too, with that look of fierce determination, which had a strange effect. The brow was knitted into a heavy frown; the full black eye fixed upon the pavement, though nothing was to be seen there but the dim shadow of the aisle; the nostril was curled, as if with strong contempt for some object in his own thoughts; but the turn of the mouth was that of deep sad-

ness ; and thus he stood for several minutes, till suddenly the whole aspect changed, and, though as mingled as before, the expression presented elements entirely different. A low suppressed laugh caused his lips to part ; a gleam of triumphant joy lighted up his eye as if from the anticipation of some difficult success ; the knitting of the brow passed away, and the only part of his former look that remained was the scornful turn of the nostril and the upper lip.

It may seem strange to the reader that I have paused to give so minute a description of the features of a man who was dressed in the garb of a villein or serf, attached as domestic to some noble house ; but so it was, and such, in fact, was the condition of the personage now before us. The dress that he wore was of brown *bure*, as it was then called, but it fitted him well ; and, with a certain degree of vanity as well as taste, he had contrived to give it so much additional smartness, that it became his person as well as more lordly robes. Each sinewy limb was shown to the best advantage, and the symmetrical grace of his whole person was displayed, rather than concealed, by the close-fitting garments which covered him.

In saying that his station was that of a domestic in some noble house, I do not mean to imply that it was inferior, as compared with that held by others in his own grade of society. It must be remembered that many of those tasks of personal attendance and service which are now performed by hired servants were in those days executed by young nobles of the highest rank and fairest prospects, either in the dwelling of their own parents, or in the castles of the friends and relations of their family, where they appeared as pages or squires ; and to wait upon their lord's person, to clean his armour as well as the dressing of his horse, the service of his table, and various other acts now considered menial, were then part of their daily duty. Many other functions, however, were assigned in every large mansion to serfs or villeins, who sometimes, in the house of a liberal and kindly master, were raised to offices apparently higher than those which were conferred on the young nobility of the household. There was a distinction, however, which perhaps we do not very clearly understand at present ; and although a villein might fill the post of chaplain, almoner, and counsellor, and sit at his lord's

table,\* while the sons of princes poured the wine or carved the meat, yet the serf could not, except in default of noble hands, bear his lord's shield or spear, could not give him the water to wash before dinner, or hand him the cup out of which he drank.

The dress of the person whom I have described was good, fine in the texture, and such as none but one highly favoured would have been permitted to wear, though it was still that of the villein, and showed that, although the form and the features might all be as high and refined as Grecian sculpture ever displayed, yet the tint of slavery was in the blood, and that the wearer was a serf of the soil.

By this time, however, great changes and ameliorations had taken place in the condition of that class, and they stood in a very different position from that in which they had been placed at the time that Europe first issued forth from the darkness of the ninth century. Many wise and good monarchs had willingly and anxiously contributed to add comforts to the situation of the lower orders, and if not actually to unbind the fetters from their hands, at least so to regulate the relations between the lords of the soil and them, that those fetters might not be made more galling. Many unwise and vicious monarchs, too—for God often uses the wicked as instruments of good—in their quarrels with the baronage, which sometimes trod rather hard upon the skirts of the royal mantle, had endeavoured to punish the obnoxious class by giving back some of the privileges of man to those on whom that class trampled; and thus, though the villeins upon the lord's estates or territory were still nominally his chattels, as much as his horse, his dog, or his hawk, yet he was restrained in his dealing with them within certain limits and by certain rules: their property was protected, their lives and persons were under the safeguard of the law, and they were no longer a mere herd of cattle, to be dealt with at the pleasure of a brutal owner. The cultivators of the soil, the mechanic, the manufacturer, the merchant, the inhabitants of all villages, and many of the dwellers in towns, were generally classed as villeins. Though, long before the period of which I now speak, the forma-

\* This fact is proved by various particulars given by the Sire de Joinville respecting the household of St. Louis

tion of communes had introduced a distinction, and the free commons of a great number of cities presented an intermediate class between the baronage and the serfs, they were still ranked as villeins by blood, though enjoying all the rights of freemen, without the privileges of nobility. In rural districts, however, many a terrible and degrading badge of slavery still remained fixed upon the peasant.\* In one place, the *right of the lord* implied one degrading service; in another, it comprised others; and in times of trouble and disaster, when the strong hand of lawful authority was removed, and the arm of the law shortened, exaction, pillage, oppression, and tyranny resumed their full sway: the dearest rights and most sacred feelings of human nature were set at naught; and the only safeguard of the peasant was the honour, virtue, and benevolence of some of the chivalrous lords of the land. That safeguard was sufficient to protect many, but it was not sufficient to secure all; and although, in some instances, the noble châtelain was a father to those below him, ever ready to succour them in sorrow or calamity, to shield them from danger, and to avenge them against wrong, yet in others the feudal lord was the enemy of all around, the tyrant of all beneath.

The times I write of, too, were among the most terrible that ever the fair land of France beheld. Her king was a captive in a foreign land; her nobility, overthrown in the terrible day of Poitiers, were scattered, disunited, and dismayed; her fields overrun with bands of lawless adventurers, living alone by plunder, and inured to massacre and bloodshed as a trade; her finances ruined; her young prince powerless, insulted, and betrayed, struggling with a fierce faction and ambitious demagogues in the capital, and not one bond of union existing throughout the whole land but that of similar language, manners, and faith. The latter, alas! was suffered to have but little sway either in moderating men's passions or directing their actions. In the turbulence, the excitement, the disorganization of the day, the functions of religion were reduced to the task of affording consolation and nourishing hope; but even this was a blessed privilege where all else was sorrow, wretchedness, and despair.

It may easily be conceived, then, that while such a state of anarchy existed in the land, the condition of

the peasantry in many districts daily became worse. Though the law existed, there was none to administer the law, or to enforce it between the lord and his serf, and thus the will of every man became the only rule in his own territories. *Jacques Bonhomme*, as the insolent nobles called the unfortunate cultivator of the soil, sowed in fear and reaped with pain; and in many places, ills more burdensome than human nature could bear ground the labourer to the earth.

Such was the state of France at the time when the personage whom I have described stood alone in the dark aisle of the church of St. Peter at Montvoye, musing bitterly over many a topic of deep and terrible interest. By his dress one might perceive that he was of the class of serfs, and that he was some favoured domestic in a noble house. From the scenes that are to come, we shall gather the character of his mind, and see more of his condition and feelings, as well as learn those actions which gained him a place, though a sad one, in the history of the times in which he lived.

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## CHAPTER II.

SUDDENLY the door at the end of the aisle opened, and a ray from the setting sun broke in upon the darkness, tinting the manifold columns and arches as it passed, and casting a sudden brilliance down the long perspective of the pavement, like one of those bright and wonderful thoughts which sometimes, in the mental world, burst upon subjects that have remained obscure for ages, discovering to the eye of a Newton or a Herschel a long chain of beautiful facts, all lighted up by the removal of one dark obstacle.

The opening of the door disclosed to the eyes of him who was standing in the church two forms entering from the cloistered quadrangle of the abbey adjoining, and he instantly drew back into one of the small chapels, and bent his knee before a shrine, though, to say sooth, he prayed not in his heart, but gazed between the pillars that concealed his own person at the others, as they paused for a moment in the archway, with the light shining round them as if in a picture.

The two figures were those of an old man and a young one: the first was dressed in the long robe of a gray friar; but the loose heavy gown—even when massed in the dark shadow, as he stood with the light flowing in from behind—could not conceal the calm dignity of his person; while the ray, catching upon the bald head, and streaming through the white hair, showed enough to account for a certain bend of the whole form by the heavy pressure of the hand of time. The younger man who stood beside him was tall and upright, with an air of easy grace and commanding power in every line; and as he advanced, with a step firm but noiseless, and slow to suit the pace of his more aged companion, he offered a picture of vigorous manhood in its early prime, such as might well busy the hand of a skilful artist to depict.

As the latter turned to speak to the good prior of Montvoye—for such was the monk who walked by his side—the light caught upon his face, and displayed a countenance decidedly handsome in feature, but deriving its great beauty from the expression, which was very peculiar. It was calm, thoughtful, and even gentle, with a flickering smile hanging at that moment round the lip, which seemed to denote a quick and playful fancy; but the tranquillity of the expression had nothing of weakness in it: as did his whole figure and carriage, it gave the idea of high mental and bodily powers, great energy and activity of character, though those qualities were for the time in repose.

The complexion was fair rather than dark; but the face was browned with much exposure to the sun and wind, and a distinct line across the forehead showed where the casque or the cap had shaded the head from the summer heat. The eyes were hazel, and fringed with long dark lashes, but the hair and beard were of a light, rich brown.

He was speaking as he came forward; but the only words which caught the ear of the person who remained kneeling in the neighbouring chapel were, "I am right glad it is so, father, for I have myself known what it is to lose those who are most dear. Not only is your noble brother living, but in good health. His wounds are now healed; but he is one of those who could not survive a field like that without some worthy marks of having done his duty."

"You do him justice, noble lord," replied the prior:

"Maurice de Mauvinet\* will never shame his race. We have mourned for him as dead, and well may we now rejoice to find him living."

The prior said no more for the moment, but walked on by the side of his more youthful companion, musing as he went. Both paused, bowed, and crossed themselves as they traversed the nave before the high altar; and then, taking their way to the opposite door of the transept, they issued forth upon the steps of the church, before which stood a glittering train of men-at-arms, calmly talking with some monks and serving-men, or arranging the caparisons of their horses, and soothing the eager fire with which the chargers fretted to depart.

The young nobleman turned as if to take his leave; but the prior spoke first, with a thoughtful smile. "I will not detain you long, noble sir," he said, "for the evening is at hand, and night is no time to travel in this poor land of France; but yet I would fain hear another word or two of my dear brother's fate ere we part, though to-morrow perhaps I shall meet with you again."

"Nay, speak boldly, my good father," replied the knight: "I fear not the darkness. What would you know more?"

"First," said the prior, "I would ask when we may hope to see my brother back?"

"Nay, that I know not," answered his companion: "right soon, I trust, good father. He may come whenever he will. 'Tis now some six weeks since that, journeying by Poitiers, I first had reason to believe the letters he had written, as soon as his wounds were healed, had never reached his friends in France. It is no marvel that such has been the case; for where no law remains—and it would seem that all rule has been done away with here—letters often find other hands than those for which they were intended. However, I wrote to the noble lord at once, and sent the packet by a trusty messenger, who I know has since reached the good city of London, telling him what I had heard, and beseeching him to come over hither and seek his liberty himself, lest men should say I had acted so discourteously as not to put a worthy prisoner to ransom. It never crossed my mind, however, that his near friends and

\* Maurice de Mauvinet was seneschal of Touraine, and was taken prisoner, severely wounded, at the battle of Poitiers. He is one of those particularly mentioned in the letter of the Black Prince.

children themselves were all this time ignorant that he was in life, till late last night, at Tours, I heard, by a mere gossip's talk in the inn, that he was mourned as dead, and his young son, called Count of Mauvinet, in his place."

"The boy will gladly give his countship up," replied the prior, "to see his small image in his dear father's eyes again. But one question more, most noble captal. At what sum have you fixed my brother's ransom? We will raise it speedily, and with right good-will."

"Faith, my father," answered the other, "it was not I who fixed it; 'twas himself. The simple facts are these. After the battle, when night was just approaching, I went out to seek for the body of my sister's son, who had fallen. We found it among a heap of dead, and lying near was what seemed the corpse of my good Lord of Mauvinet. They had stripped him of his arms and clothing; but I knew his face, for we had held a conference the day before on some matters regarding a truce; and, thinking it were but an act of charity towards his friends, I bade my people raise his body too, and bear it to my tent. Ere we reached the camp, however, I found that the spark of life was not yet extinct; and therefore we gave him such tending as the time admitted. He recovered, as you know; and I scarcely held it just to put a man so captured to ransom. He, however, fixed the sum himself at five thousand marks of silver, and reckoned on having it right speedily. However, believe me, my good father, it was not seeking his ransom that I came; it was merely that, hearing you all believed him dead, I thought it but a pleasant ride to turn some twenty miles from my way, and, by the tidings of his safety, to light up joy in hearts that had long been desolate."

"Joy indeed do you bear with you, noble captal," replied the prior, "and glad will be the welcome that waits you at my brother's house when once the news that you bring is known; but yet, at this hour and in these times, I fear you would not easily get admission within the gates of a castle whose châtelain is a boy of six years old, and whose lady does not yet number nineteen, unless you were accompanied by some known friend. I have therefore—"

"I should but have to ride a few miles farther," replied the knight, interrupting him with a gay laugh.

"The truce holds me from storming the castle; and if they will not have the good news I bear them to-night, they must wait till you carry it to them to-morrow morning."

"Not so, noble sir," replied the prior; "for although, as I told you, the abbot being absent at this moment, I cannot to-night have the satisfaction of accompanying you to Mauvinet myself, yet I have provided means for ensuring your reception. I have just sent for a youth now at the abbey. He is well known in my brother's house, and greatly trusted by us all, who will both serve to guide you thither, and open the gates to you when you arrive. He has not yet come up, I see; but I suppose he was taken by surprise, and has some small preparations to make for his journey."

The knight thanked the good monk for his care in simple terms, and then remained plunged in silence; for he had many another thought to busy his mind withal, and the things that were now passing round him formed as yet but a light episode in his existence. The prior himself resumed the discourse, however, saying, after a short pause, "In behalf of the youth who is coming I would bespeak your kind consideration, my lord; for though I must not say that he is of noble birth, yet he is in all things far above the race of mere peasants."

"The son of some citizen?" asked the knight, with an air of indifference.

"Not exactly," replied the prior. "His father held lands in Normandy, but fell under some false suspicions during the troubles in that district, and was put to death by his lord unjustly. His wife and child fled hither, where they found a protector in my brother; and the mother dying, the youth has been brought up partly at the abbey, partly at the castle."

"There have been so many troubles in Normandy, good father," answered the knight, "that I know not well which you mean; but if you speak of those that occurred a few years ago, when your good prince, King John, held what we call *the bloody feast of Rouen*, arrested many noble gentlemen at his son's own table, and after dinner struck off their heads in the field behind the castle; if you mean those troubles, all I can say is, the unjust lord of this good youth's father had a goodly example of cruelty and tyranny before his eyes."

"It was previous to the time you speak of that these

events took place," replied the prior; "but I beseech you, noble sir, cast no harsh censure on my king, while he lies yet a prisoner in a distant land. So long as he was able, he was ever ready to meet in arms, as a monarch and a knight, those who gainsayed his deeds; but now—"

"I was wrong, I was wrong, good father," replied the caput: "he is as valiant a prince as ever drew a sword, and I should not have blamed him when he could not answer to the charge."

"He may have had good cause for what he did, my lord," replied the churchman. "There runs a whisper among us that the false King of Navarre had seduced the inexperience of the prince to rise against his father, and that the Lord of Harcourt was privy thereunto."

"Still the king confounded guilt and innocence together," replied the other, "and put noble gentlemen to death without a trial. But here comes the youth of whom you spoke, I suppose. He seems a likely strippling, and more fit to make a man-at-arms of than a monk."

"In truth, my lord," answered the prior, "it is plain to see that he has no great taste for the gown. We have done the best we could for him; taught him a world of learning, if he would use it wisely; but, to say sooth, he has ever shown himself fonder of watching the tiltyard, and secretly practising with the sword and spear, than reading theology or singing in our choir. He was generally at the castle till my brother marched for Poitiers; but since then I have not well known how to dispose of him, for here we cannot do as in England, where persons not of noble birth can bear honourable arms and gain a high renown."

A kind and ready answer sprang to the lips of his companion, but a moment's thought made him determine to pause a while; and he turned to examine more particularly the person of the young man who approached.

He was a very different being from him whom we have already described as lingering moodily in the aisle of the church. He was not by four or five years so old as the other, and his countenance bore the expression of youth, which is a very peculiar one, and which, once lost, can never be regained. It was not that his face was without traces of thought; for, with all its cheerful, sunshiny look, there was reflection, and imagination, and

mind in every line ; but it was that there were none of the furrows of care, anxiety, and grief upon it, none of the lines that show that the heart has been used, and a portion of its freshness taken away. There might, indeed, come a shade of melancholy over his brow from time to time, but that shade was as a floating cloud over a summer sky, and not the dull gray expanse of a chill autumn day. Neither were there on that countenance the branded stamp of fiery passions, nor the harsh traces of gnawing discontent. It was frank and open ; changeful, but not moody ; thoughtful, but not sad. The complexion was rather fair than dark ; the limbs light and active, though giving a promise of great strength ; and there was in every motion, as in every look, a breathing spirit of young exuberant life that had something wonderfully prepossessing in it to the eye.

His dress was that of the richest class of peasantry ; but that he had received an education far above his birth was evident from the grace with which he moved. As he approached the prior and his companion, he uncovered his head, listened with respectful but not servile attention to the directions that he received, and then, as soon as the knight had mounted, laid his hand upon the saddlebow of a horse that had been prepared for himself, and without touching the stirrup bounded into the seat.

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### CHAPTER III.

THERE was a castle upon a slight rising ground in the midst of a wide basin in the hills. It was strongly fortified, according to the military architecture of the fourteenth century : barbican, portcullis, moat, and drawbridge defended it sufficiently on all sides against the ordinary means of attack ; and the tall walls and towers, with their crenelles and loopholes, threatened an approaching enemy with sad annoyance in his advance. Sweeping down the lower slopes of the neighbouring uplands, indeed, were various scattered woods, leaving wide open fields between them ; but they came at no point so near to the castle as to give a coming foe the means of concealing his proceedings.

The moat, or piece of water which surrounded the fortress itself, was somewhat more than fifty yards broad, and was, indeed, one of its best defences ; for only one means of traversing its deep water existed, which was by a narrow causeway, not carried straight across, but with a bend or elbow in the middle, so that any inimical troops which might attempt to force their way over, before they reached the drawbridge and barbican, must necessarily expose their flank, first on the one side and then on the other, to the whole artillery of the castle walls.

Those walls themselves, at the point opposite to the causeway, approached close to the edge of the water, and in some places the gray foundations dipped themselves therein ; but on the three other sides a crescent-shaped slip of meadow stretched out between the chateau itself and the greater moat, together with a small piece of ground cultivated as a garden, and one or two old trees. The breadth of this field was nowhere more than thirty or forty yards, and between it and the walls was a narrow moat, cut from the other, and crossed by two or three drawbridges, which led to posterns in the towers sufficiently wide and high to permit the passage of a horse ; for, in truth, the green meadow that we have mentioned was used, in times when it might be dangerous to cross to the other side of the great moat, for the purpose of practising those chivalrous sports which were a part of the daily life of that period.

It was about half past eight o'clock when the party which we have seen quit the Abbey of Montvoys paused for a moment on the slope of one of the neighbouring hills, and the young guide, who had not quitted the side of his noble companion during the ride, pointed with his hand towards the valley below, saying, " There, noble sir, is the castle ! "

The moon had risen little more than an hour above a line of dark wood that skirted the distant horizon behind the castle ; and her living beams showed the whole dark masses of the ancient feudal building cutting clear upon the luminous sky behind, while the wide moat, except where the shadow of the towers fell, shone bright and silver-like in the white moonlight. A long row of windows in the lower part of the keep appeared illuminated by lights within, and from the casement of a chamber in the story just above came forth the rays of a lamp.

"You see, noble sir," continued the youth, after they had paused for a moment, "you see they are still waking. That is the chamber of the Lady Adela, above the knight's hall."

"You have guided us well and quickly, good youth," answered his companion: "let us spur on, however, lest we have yet to wake the lady from her slumbers."

The young man followed rapidly, but still a step behind the knight; for, though he had been treated with kindly courtesy, there had not been wanting that tone of conscious superiority in the captal's demeanour which he was well entitled to assume, both by station and renown in arms. The youth felt it somewhat painfully, however; even more, perhaps, than he would have done from those whom he knew well, and who had not the habit of treating him as the mere peasant, whom the churl's blood excluded from all courteous consideration. I have said, indeed, that he had not been so used by the knight, who had addressed him often, and asked him many a question, showing more interest in him than most men might have done so circumstanced. But still, the moment the answer was given, the captal had relapsed into a state of apparent indifference, remained silent for several minutes, and then speaking of something totally different.

Why he should expect more attention from strangers than from those with whom he was familiar, the youth could hardly tell; but yet the cold want of interest with which the knight heard his replies seemed to show him more sensibly the dark spot of the serf's blood: it was as if each man he met marked it upon his forehead, and treated him accordingly. His nature was a generous nature, however: he might grieve without anger; he could feel pain without bitterness; and although he longed to conquer his fate, it was by great and noble deeds, which would shame the world for fixing on any class of men the odious name of villeins.

When they had reached the bottom of the descent, the knight again drew in his horse, and paused to look up at the dark towers, as they rose majestically against the sky. The light was still shining from the window above, and a faint strain of music found its way out into the air of night.

"She sings!" said the captal, speaking to himself. "She sings! So soon do deep griefs pass from the mind of youth!"

To his surprise, the young man who rode by his side, and who had never ventured to address him except when he himself was spoken to, now replied somewhat sharply, saying, "It is a hymn! Hark!"

The captal made no observation, but paused and listened, and now distinctly heard that the strain which he had taken for a light song was in fact a solemn address to Heaven. He did not answer the youth's observation, however, but only crossed himself, saying, "God hear her orisons! Now we must seek admission quickly. Over this causeway seems our nearest way."

"It is the only way," replied the young man; "but take care how you try it till I have blown my horn, for you might have a flight of arrows on you, such as fell at Poitiers."

"Now Heaven forbid!" replied the captal: "wind your horn, good youth."

The young man raised his horn to his lips, and blew a long and cheerful blast. A moment after, a warder on the barbican answered in the same tone, and shouted out a welcome in reply to the well-known sounds, but at the same time demanded aloud, "Who have you got with you?"

"I know not your name, noble sir," said the guide to his companion. "All I know is, that you are a friend of my good lord the prior."

"Say it is the Captal de Buch," answered the knight, "who comes with good tidings to the house of Mauvinet."

"What, the noble Captal de Buch!" exclaimed the youth, gazing up in his companion's face, "who led the English horse against the battle of the constables at Poitiers?"

"The same," replied the captal, "the same, young man; but be sure you say he brings good tidings; for my name is not too well loved in France, and may not gain me admission without something added."

"Your name is honoured throughout the world!" replied the young man; "but I will do your bidding if you will wait for but a moment here;" and, riding on alone, he approached the barbican, and after a few words was admitted by the warder.

The Captal de Buch remained in a musing mood, sometimes gazing down into the glistening waters of the moat, sometimes looking up to the moonlight sky,

sometimes scanning the dark towers, and, while his spirit was in truth busy with other things, taking in vague impressions of their military strength; for, in despite of all that has been said against it, the mind is not only capable to a certain degree of carrying on two operations at once, but generally does so; and we continually find that, while we are revolving one definite train of ideas with all the intensity of deep reflection, the casual sights that pass before the eye, and the sounds that fall upon the ear, are each marked and considered in a general manner as if by separate powers of perception and thought within us. The armed attendants of the knight in the mean while remained at some distance behind, the younger and more impetuous fretting at the brief pause, and the old and veteran followers of the great leader calmly enduring a delay which they were well aware proceeded but from necessary caution, gazing up with curious eyes at the battlements, and thinking how such a castle might be best attacked.

There was another person present, however, who had joined the party at some distance from the abbey, and who, after speaking a word to their young guide, had fallen behind. This was the remarkable man whom we have described in the first chapter, and who, after overtaking the troop, had shown no disposition to converse or jest with the light-hearted men-at-arms of the capital's train during the whole journey they had made together. His eyes were now neither turned to the sky, nor to the moat, nor to the castle, but were either fixed upon the ground, or busily engaged in scanning the forms of his temporary companions. The same scornful bend was still about his lip, and it might curl somewhat more strongly at some of the words which he caught, but he uttered not a syllable in reply.

At the end of about ten minutes the delay seemed to be long even to the capital, and from time to time he turned his eyes towards the barbican, while his horse pawed the ground impatiently, as if wondering what stayed his impetuous rider.

At length, however, the light of torches appeared in the gate; the drawbridge was once more let down, the portcullis was raised, and by the flickering glare of the flambeaux might be seen a number of armed men arraying themselves on either side of the causeway, while the youth who had guided the party thither came forth and

announced to the captal that he was welcome to the castle of Mauvinet.

Ere he entered, however, one of the old soldiers of that great officer's band rode up to his lord's side, and begged him to remark the armed throng which lined the portal of the barbican. The captal, however, merely replied with an impatient "Pshaw!" and, touching his horse slightly with the spur, rode on across the causeway, passed the outer defences, and bowing with a courteous inclination to the soldiery as he proceeded, entered the gates of the castle upon horseback, and dismounted in the courtyard. Here he found stationed several old officers to receive him; but the youth who had guided him thither still acted the part of his chief conductor, and led him forward up the steps to the great hall of the building, which was known by the name of "the knight's hall."

Although the room contained many lights, yet the part where they first entered was comparatively dark; but at the farther end was an object which instantly attracted the captal's attention, and seemed to surprise him not a little. It was the form of a girl, apparently of nineteen or twenty years of age, habited in garments of deep black, and followed by a waiting-woman in the same sombre garb. The captal could not doubt for a moment that the lady before him was the person whom he came to see; and the surprise which he evidently felt must have been excited either by the beauty and grace of her form and the loveliness of her face, or by the expression of wondering hope and joy which lighted up her countenance.

He advanced quickly towards her, however, while she, on her part, came forward with a hasty step, exclaiming, "Welcome, welcome, my good Lord Captal. Albert tells me you bring me glad tidings: I know it! I know it! My father is alive! A thousand welcomes for such happy news!" And, in the eagerness of her joy, according to the simple custom of the day, without shame or reserve, the lady approached the knight and kissed him on either side of the face, while her eyes beamed forth the delight that was in her heart. At the same time, however, as if doubting her own hopes, she repeated twice, "Is it not true? is it not true, noble knight?"

"Yes, lady," replied the captal, "it is true. Your no-

ble father does live, is well, and will soon be restored unto you. I have brought you the tidings myself, that I might have the satisfaction of witnessing the joy which I now behold."

"Joy, indeed," replied the lady, "joy, indeed! the greatest that has entered these gates for many a day; but I must send for my poor brother! Though the dear child sleeps, it is no sin to wake him with such news as this."

I will not pause to detail the farther conversation of the knight and the young lady of Mauvinet. It lasted nearly an hour, and in the course of it, all that the capital had to tell brought forth on her fair face a thousand varying and beautiful expressions, which caught the eye of one not insensible to beauty, and made him long to know more of the bright heart from which such gleams seemed to issue forth.

With graceful courtesy and kindness, though with some timidity of manner, the lady caused refreshments to be set before her guest, and pressed him to his food, while several of the old officers of her father's household stood around the table, and others went to prepare lodgings in the castle for the knight and his followers.

Adela de Mauvinet was soon joined in her task of entertaining her unexpected guest by her young brother, a boy of six or seven years old, whose gladness to hear of his father's safety seemed even beyond his years, and increased the recompense which Adela's joy had already bestowed upon the capital for the glad tidings which he had brought.

It was not till after he had told the story twice, and added many a little anecdote to gratify the children of his prisoner, that the great leader retired to rest; but if we must say truth, the thought of Adela de Mauvinet, of her beauty, and of the varying changes which had come over her countenance while he told her of her father's safety, somewhat disturbed his repose, and made his slumbers more dreamy and disturbed than they were wont to be.

Let it not be supposed for one moment that the capital was already in love. Though those were days in which such a thing was quite possible—when the Romeo and Juliet love, brought forth, like the lightning from the cloud, in a single moment, often produced effects as fierce and keen as that of heaven's bolt itself, rending

the stubborn heart, and spreading desolation round—yet the captal was of a different nature, and loved not easily, though long. Still the beauty and the grace of her whom he had that night seen for the first time touched his imagination, though not his heart, and he lay and thought for more than one half hour of Adela de Mauvinet, and dreamed of her in sleep

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## CHAPTER IV.

THERE had been a light frost upon the ground, but the morning was bright and clear, and some of the soldiery of the castle had been wrestling and playing at back-sword and buckler in that open space between the walls of the castie and the great moat which we have already mentioned. It was a fine sight to see them in the clear fresh air, with their strong and muscular limbs cast every moment into some new and graceful attitude; and several of the followers of the Captal de Buch, who came at first merely to look on, soon entered so fully into the spirit of the contest, that, when invited by some of the wrestlers to take part, they joined in and tried a fall with the rest.

There were two persons, however, who gazed for some time on the sports, but took no part therein, remaining aloof at some distance, and with crossed arms and bended heads watching the exercises in which they were unwilling or unable to mingle. Those persons were no other than the youth who had conducted the Captal de Buch to Mauvinet, and the man whom we have described as lingering in the church of Montvoye. Very different, however, was the expression on the countenance of each as they stood there and gazed. The face of the younger displayed a keen interest in all that he saw going on before him, while that of his companion was unmoved and calm, and seemed rather to hold the wrestlers and their sports in contempt than to derive any pleasure from the sight of their pastime.

"Come, Albert," he said at length, addressing the other, "come, let us get away from these brawling fools. To stand here and watch them does no good either to

you or me. You would fain join them, and be such another as themselves: I despise them, and would not be one of them if I could. Come, Albert, come, and let us talk over poor France."

"I might join them this moment if I would," replied the other; "you know they are all very kind to me."

"Kind!" replied his companion, with a bitter sneer upon his lip, and at the same time walking slowly away; "kind! and you are content to take from kindness that which is your own by right."

The young man to whom he spoke started, and looked inquiringly in his companion's face. "Mine by right!" he exclaimed; "how is it mine by right more than yours? What is it that you mean, William Caillet? How is it mine more than yours?"

"I said not that it was yours more than mine," replied Caillet; "but come away where we cannot be heard, and I will explain to you my meaning."

As he spoke he moved away with a slow step and a careless air, as if unwilling to let any of those around see that there was in his bosom deeper thoughts than were displayed by the mere surface. The other followed him across one of the small bridges, and by a postern into the castle. Caillet paused not within the building, but crossed the court, and sauntering through the great gates, approached the barbican. He walked on with an air of listless indifference, spoke a few words to the warder that let down the drawbridge for them, and then, seeing that his companion lingered, as if unwilling to go on, he said, "Come, Albert, will you not take a walk this fine morning? See how bright the sun shines: you will find matter for some new song."

The youth whom he called Albert smiled and followed him, merely replying, "I cannot go far, Caillet, for I have charge to wait upon the noble Capital de Buch till the good prior comes."

"The capital will not want you for an hour or two," said Caillet, "and you have plenty of time for a walk. Come, if you be willing; if not, stop behind. Good faith, it is the same to me. I seldom seek better company than my own; for nowadays one's thoughts are one's best friends."

The other made no answer, but accompanied him in silence, and Caillet took his way through the meadows on the opposite side of the moat, and walked on up the

slope of the hill to some trees a little in advance of the wood, which crowned a spot where a precipitous bank of no great height afforded a full view into the valley, with the castle and all the adjoining lands. There the two sat themselves down, and for several minutes Caillet spoke not a word, but continued gazing with a meditative look over the fair scene spread out before him.

His companion's eyes rested long upon the landscape also with much real enjoyment of all that is fine in nature; and, to say truth, attaching no great importance to the words of Caillet, he had totally forgotten all that had previously passed between them, when the other again resumed the subject, saying, "I asked you if you were content to take as a favour what is yours by right; and you seemed as much surprised at my saying that it is yours by right, as if you were as ignorant a peasant as any of all the many who hug their chains, scarcely knowing that they bear them."

"Still I do not understand what you mean, Caillet," replied the other. "I have no right to meddle with the sports of a rank above myself unless I am invited."

"They have thrown away much teaching upon you to very little purpose!" replied Caillet, in a tone of scornful wonder. "Is it possible that you, Albert, who have had all the learning the monks of the convent can give, and have been taught everything that even a knightly education can bestow, should be so blind, so dull, so stupid as not to know, or so base as not to feel, that yours are the same rights as those of any other man on earth; and that these proud nobles, in their gilded garments, are but of the same clay as you and I, without one difference between us and them, except that some braver and more powerful robber than themselves chanced to be the founder of their race, and to snatch from our ancestors the lands that they now possess. To prevent us from ever taking back our own, they have called us villeins—serfs; they have prescribed to us certain garments as a badge of our slavery, forbidden us the use of all but certain weapons, even to defend our lives against the beasts of the forest or the field. They have denied us practice and skill in arms, lest we should use those arms against themselves. They keep from us all knowledge, too, lest we should learn our rights as men, the tyrant vanity of their pretensions, and their feebleness and

baseness when stripped of the advantages which circumstances have given them."

"Nay, nay," replied his companion, interrupting him, "they do not keep from us all knowledge! Are we not both instances of the contrary? How very many do they themselves educate? And how very, very many of the Church have sprung from our own class?"

"Ay, of the Church!" replied Caillet, with a look of scorn, "granted of the Church. Nay, more, my short-sighted friend, I will concede more still: they are ready, they are anxious, when they see any one of more genius than the rest, when they see any one whose mind is fitted for greater things, whose spirit and nature empower him to accomplish great enterprises, they are ready, I say, gladly to educate him for the Church."

"And is not that noble and kind?" cried Albert, interrupting him.

"It might be so," answered the other, in a sharp tone, "were it done with a good motive; but why is it they do this? Is it not to bind down both the souls and bodies of the great and high-minded to a profession which affords the surest safeguard their usurpation can have, which bids us still endure in patience, and cuts us off from all those ties of kindred which would make us feel for the wrongs of our fellow-men? The hands of the clergy cannot bear arms against the cowards that enslave us; the voice of the clergy must not be raised to bid the serf shake off his chains, the villein to cast off his bondage. This is the cause why, whenever a child is perceived of somewhat greater powers than the rest of his race, he is sent to the convent or the seminary, and bred up in the trammels of another sort of servitude, more lowering, more debasing than that from which he escapes, because it is the servitude of the mind, because it is the villeinage of the heart. And why is all this? why is it, but because they are afraid of us; because these insolent men, who, when they meet the peasant in the field, scatter the dust over him with their horses' hoofs, and call him in contempt *Jacques Bonhomme*; because these very men are cowards at their hearts, and fear the very worms they tread upon."

His young companion had listened with a thoughtful brow, a somewhat gloomy air, and an eye bent upon the ground, with sensations that prevented him for some

time from making any reply. He felt that there was some truth in what Caillet said; but he felt, also, that it was not all true, and yet did not at once see where lay the line between the truth and falsehood. At length, however, when his companion accused the nobles, whom he had been accustomed through life to honour and to respect, of cowardice as well as tyranny, he burst forth with a laugh not altogether gay: "Nay, nay," he cried, "nay, nay, Caillet, some of them may be tyrants, blood-thirsty, cruel tyrants; nay, we know that it is so, but they are no cowards. I would fain see you, my good friend, try your hands with one of these who you say are afraid."

"Some day perchance you may," replied the other; "and wherever the fear lay, Albert, it should not be on my part. But enough of that! I am no boaster; and when the time of trial comes, I shall not be found wanting. You say they are no cowards: would that France could find it so! for if she did, these proud Englishmen would not thus be riding over the land as lords and masters. Would that France had ever found it so! for then we should not have seen King John's whole host scattered like a flock of sheep by a poor handful of famished English knights; we should not have seen eight thousand men chasing a host ten times their number; we should not have seen men drowning themselves in the fords for very terror. Out upon it! Will you tell me that at Poitiers the cowardly nobles did not betray their king and sell their country? Shame, shame upon France! If the villeins had fought at Poitiers instead of their lords, history would have had to tell another tale, and this young tiger of England, this black prince, Edward, would now be in chains in Paris. Out upon it, I say, that we should thus be sold by dastards into the hands of our enemies!"

He had spoken so vehemently that his companion had not an opportunity to interrupt him, though he had been very willing so to do. The moment the other stopped, however, he exclaimed, "No, Caillet, no! you are wrong, you are quite wrong. Who does not know that courage without conduct is nothing? Look at our own King John: did not the great prince who conquered him pronounce that he had done to the utmost his duties as a knight? Did you not hear the herald tell in the castle-hall how the English prince himself served him the cup

at supper, and declared that he had won the fame of the best knight in that day's battle? Then look at our own noble lord, found upon the field with twenty wounds upon him: was that like a coward, Caillet? All the eight thousand noblemen who died where they stood, did they show any lack of courage?"

"No," replied Caillet, with a bitter sneer curling his lip, "no, they certainly did not. But what think you, Albert, of the twenty thousand who fled without striking a stroke? what think you of the thousands and the tens of thousands, ay, the hundreds of thousands, that were seen flying over the plains of Poitou, with nothing but their own fear pursuing them? France was sold to England, not for gold, but for a worse price—fear!"

"Nay, nay," replied his companion, "you do them wrong. Have we not all heard how often, in every period of history, a momentary panic has overthrown a host?"

"Perhaps," replied Caillet, "had you been there, you would have fled too."

The young man's cheek turned red; but Caillet proceeded before he could reply, adding, "No, Albert, no, I am well aware you would not; there is not one of us that would; and therefore it is that I say, if the peasants of France had fought at Poitiers, England would not have won so great a victory."

"I know not," replied his companion, "I know not that! All I am sure of is, that thousands of our nobles did their duty gallantly, fought well, and, if they did not conquer, died or were taken prisoners when they could resist no more."

"And is that all that you are sure of, Albert Denyn?" continued his companion, in a stern and reproachful tone; "is that all that you have learned? you, who so lately have travelled all the way to Poitiers to inquire about our lord? Do you not know that the country is in misery and starvation? Do you not know that the peasantry are oppressed and ground into the dust? Do you not know that, even where the cruel lord of the land spares the countrymen, the bloody hand of the adventurers, who ravage the country, plagues them at their very hearths with fire and sword? Do you not know that the misery, the agony, and the distress of the people can reach no higher point? that they labour in the fields with their terrified eyes looking round every mo-

ment for an enemy? that they pass by the chateau and the town in haste, lest the scourge of their oppressors should reach them on their way? that they dare not sleep even in their wretched cabins for fear the robbers should be upon them? and that they lie through the miserable night in boats moored in the river or the lake, lest murder, and violation, and wrong should visit their habitation in the darkness? Do you not know all this, Albert Denyn? and do you find nothing to pity in the state of your brethren throughout the land?"

"I have heard that such things do exist," replied the other, in a sad tone, "but on the road to Poitiers I saw little of them. I saw the effects of war: I saw desolated fields, and people in distress, and much mourning, and many a noble castle ruined and destroyed; but the peasant seemed to have suffered less than his lord; and I was told everywhere that the adventurers made war upon the palace, but not upon the cottage. Yet I say not, Caillet, that your representation is not just: I am aware that such great miseries exist: I am aware that want and starvation reign in some of the finest parts of France; and, from my very soul, I grieve for and pity the poor creatures who are so suffering."

"Ay," said Caillet, in a musing tone, "I have been told that on the side of Poitiers the famine is not so bad; but I will tell you, Albert, what I myself have seen. I have seen a dying child clinging to the cold breast of its dead mother, and seeking nourishment in vain, while the famished father sat by and saw, and could give no aid, because he had not seen food himself for many a day. This was the first sight I beheld when I was lately sent to Brie. A little farther on I came to a brighter scene, a spot in the hills, which seemed to have escaped the scourge of war, and to enjoy as much happiness as yet remained in France. The fields were rich and plentiful; it was then, you know, the time of harvest, and abundant sheaves of corn loaded the ground. I even heard a peasant singing: a sound that had not met my ear for many a day; but suddenly I saw a band of men come down from the neighbouring castle with carts and wagons, many a train; they came into those fields; they took up that harvest; they loaded their wagons therewith; they asked no man's leave; they gave no man an account; all they said was, that it was for their lord's ransom; their lord, who had been taken

while flying like a coward from the field of Poitiers. I turned to look for the man who had been singing, and saw him sitting with the tears flowing from his eyes, thinking of the coming winter, and the misery of his wife and children. I rode on as fast as I could go, for the sight was terrible to me; and at length I heard the sound of merriment, the tabret and the flute, and my heart rejoiced at the sound. Dismounting from my horse, I went into the village to see what good fortune could make people so happy in the midst of misery and sorrow. It was a marriage going on, and the farmer's daughter was being led back from the church to the sound of the pipe. All that her parents could spare had been given to deck her out upon her bridal day. She was as fair a young creature as ever you beheld, not unlike our own sweet lady of the castle;" and as he spoke, Caillet fixed his eyes keenly upon the countenance of his companion, repeating, "not unlike, I say, the Lady Adela. Her bridegroom walked beside her, and ever and anon he turned to gaze upon her, thinking that she was his own, and never to be parted from him again. But at that moment came by a gay troop, with glittering garments, and gold and furs, and all the good peasants bowed them lowly down before the lord of the village and his guests. So the noble stopped to speak, and to gaze upon the peasant's daughter in her bridal finery; and he said a world of gallant things to her, and told her she was as fair as any lady in the land; and then she blushed to hear such praises, and looked lovelier than before. At length he went away; but, ere he had been gone half an hour, his people came down to summon the young bride up to the castle, without father, or brother, or mother, or husband; and when she trembled and would not go, they took her by force; and when the bridegroom strove to rescue her, they struck him with a partisan upon the head, and left him as one dead upon the ground."

"And was he dead?" exclaimed Albert, with his eyes flashing fire; "and was he really dead?"

"I know not," answered the other, coldly, but in his heart well pleased to see the eagerness which he had raised in his companion; "I know not. It was no business of mine, you know, Albert; they were but peasants, villeins, serfs. 'How now, Jacques Bonhomme!' cried the lord's bailiff, as he struck the bridegroom on

his head with his partisan. 'Dare you resist my lord's will?' and I heard the iron strike against the bone of his scull."

"But was he dead? What became of the bride?" demanded Albert, eagerly. "You did not leave them so, Caillet. Was he dead, I say?"

"Better for him if he had been," replied Caillet, in a solemn tone: "he lived, but how long I know not. His bride did not return for several days; and she was dead ere I passed by again."

Albert Denyn pressed his hands upon his eyes, and remained for several minutes in deep thought. Caillet took care not to disturb his revery, adding not another word to those which had produced the effect he wanted. At length Albert raised his head suddenly, and started up from the spot where they were sitting, exclaiming, "It is time that I should go, Caillet; it is time that I should go."

"Nay, nay," replied the other, "you have half an hour yet, and I have much to say; but I know whither you would go, and I cannot blame you. Though I grieve for you, Albert, I cannot blame you, for she is well worthy of love."

"Who? What do you mean?" exclaimed Albert Denyn. "I know not what you would say, Caillet."

"You know right well, Albert Denyn!" replied Caillet; "but don't let me pry into your secrets. Once we were friends, but now you give me not your confidence; and yet I wish you well, and would fain see you happy. You might be so too, were you other than you are; but they have taken care so to enthrall you with prejudices, that I fear you will not dare to strive for the prize, were you even certain of winning it."

Albert gazed at him for a moment, and then, resuming his seat, once more covered his eyes with his hands, and seemed to fall into deep thought. Caillet also bent his look upon the ground in a musing mood; but he turned his gaze from time to time for a single moment upon his young companion, calculating all that was passing within, till at length, judging that what he had said had worked in his mind sufficiently, he once more renewed the subject.

"I cannot blame you, Albert," he said, "and you might be happy if you would; but with your feelings and your thoughts in regard to our tyrant masters, what

you dream of is madness, and every thought that you give to her is but adding to your own misery."

"And it is madness in you to speak thus, Caillet," replied Albert, suddenly rising again; "utter madness! You know not what you speak of! You do *not* know my feelings nor my thoughts! You fancy that I imagine things impossible, when no such ideas ever enter into my mind. It is phrensy, William Caillet: I tell you, it is sheer phrensy in you to talk thus, and would be worse in me to listen to you."

"Stay, Albert, yet stay a moment," replied Caillet, laying his hand upon his arm. "You must listen to a few words more, as you have heard so much already. You need not go to the castle yet: the capital is with the Lady Adela; and, if I judged his looks last night aright, he will not thank the man who interrupts him. You may well spare me a few minutes more; and, ere you again say that I know not the feelings of your heart, be a little more sure that the assertion is true."

"You do not know, you cannot know," answered Albert, vehemently, but still with a sudden degree of hesitation and sinking of his voice, which showed the keen eye of his companion that he was afraid the inmost thoughts of his bosom were really discovered. Gently drawing him by the arm, Caillet made him once more sit down by him, saying, "Albert Denyn, it is a friend who speaks to you. Listen, and I will show you what I know, or, if you like the term better, what I fancy."

"You are wrong, you are wrong," replied Albert, as he sat down; "but speak on if you will, it matters not: I am not the madman that you think;" and, while his companion proceeded, he gazed forward upon vacancy with an abstracted air, as if he would fain have persuaded himself and Caillet that he was utterly indifferent to the subject of discourse.

His keen companion was not to be deceived, however; and he went on, saying, "Do you think, Albert, that I have gone on in the same dwelling with you, except during the time that you have been away at the abbey, for nearly ten years, without knowing something of your mind and character? Do you think that I have lived with you so intimately the last four years, watching you every day, marking your every action, and hearing your every word, without knowing the passion that has been growing up in your heart, without seeing that in some sort it is returned?"

"Hush! hush! Caillet," replied his companion. "Returned! what mean you by returned? But I must not pretend to misunderstand you. Yet you are mistaken; in all this you are mistaken. Passion! It cannot be passion that I feel; it is too humble, too lowly, too hopeless. Oh! no, Caillet, no; call it by some other name—deep, deep devotion, if you will—respect, admiration, love—yes, love; love such as the most humble may feel to the most high, but love without even a dream of hope, without an expectation, without one presumptuous thought. Oh! no, Caillet, no; call it not passion—that is not the name."

He spoke with great agitation and eagerness, and when he had done, pressed his hand upon his brow, and bent down his head upon his knee. "Call it what name thou wilt, my good Albert," replied Caillet, with a slight sneer: "thou art far more learned than I am, though the chaplain vowed I was a good scholar too. But, I say, call it what thou wilt. So that my meaning is clear, it is all the same to me."

"Returned!" continued Albert Denyn, again raising his head, and heeding not the words of his companion, but going on in the train of his own thoughts; "returned! Vain, vain imagination! Surely, Caillet, Satan must have put such a vision in your mind to tempt and grieve me. Oh! no; as we have spoken thus far, I must speak farther. I believe you love me, Caillet: I am sure, at least, you would not injure me; and I will not deny that, to me, there seems about that sweet lady's looks, and words, and movements, some spirit almost divine, which hallows the very ground on which she sets her foot. How often have I stood and watched for the hour of her coming forth, as weary travellers look for the rising sun! How often have I stood, when I could not or dared not join the gay cavalcade, to gaze upon her from some distant tower, as she followed her father, while he flew his hawks over the plains round about! How often have I contented myself, since I have lately been at the abbey, by standing in yon meadow opposite, and watching the light in her chamber window, and thinking that she sat there at her orisons, while I prayed Heaven to pour its blessings on her too!"

"And has she not marked that service, that devotion?" said Caillet, more in the tone of an assertion

than a question. "Has she not marked it, and rewarded it with smiles such as she bestows on none of all the household but yourself?"

"Smiles," replied Albert: "oh! yes, she smiles kindly and sweetly, because she sees that I would fain please and serve her; but they are cold, cold smiles, Caillet—cold to what I feel. It is but the approbation that she gives to the devoted servant of her house; a passing casual glance, with one kindly look upon him, who the moment after is altogether forgotten, but who never forgets her—no, not for one moment throughout the live-long day. Yes, Caillet, you have seen her smile upon me gently and placidly; but as the moon shines on the water—bright sweetness, without warmth. Oh! no, Caillet, no; that is no return for sensations such as mine."

Caillet laughed and answered, "And yet you disclaim all passion, Albert. You own, however, that she smiles upon you, and all who see her know it. You acknowledge, too, that you love her, and none who have eyes and see you near her can doubt it. Nor do I deny that she is worthy of all devotion, though she deals proudly with me, as you well know. Though when she passes by me, her head is carried more haughtily, her eye assumes a deeper fire; though to me she takes all the air of one of the proud tyrants of the land, yet I deny not—nay, I willingly allow—that her beauty is worth the attachment of any one, whether rich or poor, noble or serf."

"Oh! more than her beauty," exclaimed Albert; "her gentleness, her kindness, her true nobility of nature, those are worth love indeed. Were she not beautiful, I could love her full as well."

Caillet smiled again. "Had she not been beautiful," he said, "would you have ever felt so, Albert?"

"Oh! yes," replied the other, "beyond a doubt. How many things would have made me love her; how many acts of kindness has she shown me; how much goodness that I have not deserved! Thanks be to God that I have neither known sickness nor much care in life; but when her father's horse struck me on the shoulder, and cast me down upon the ground, what a cry she gave, and sprang forward to see if I were hurt! When have I asked for any favour at the hands either of our noble lord or the good prior, without her seconding my prayer and ensuring its success?"

"And yet," said Caillet, "you would have me think that she does not return your affection."

"I say again, it is but simple kindness that she feels," replied Albert; "when I tell these things, I speak selfishly. Are there not a thousand other motives for loving her besides these? I will ask you, Caillet—you yourself, who judge so harshly—I will ask you, I say, whether there was ever any one so tender, so gentle, so beneficent to every one who approaches her? Have we not all seen her tend upon the sickbed of a poor peasant with as much care as if that peasant had been a prince? Do you not remember, when the poor girl Marritonne died, how night after night she sat by her bedside, watching her pale face, and giving her the cool drink to quench the terrible thirst that she endured?"

"I know nothing of it," replied Caillet, somewhat impatiently; "I visited not the girl's sick-chamber; and you, good Albert, can but know this tale from the report of some of the serving-women."

"Nay, nay," replied Albert, "not from their report, but my own eyesight, Caillet; for I was sent many a time by my good lord to call the lady from a task which he feared might injure her health. Twice, too, I went with him myself; so that I speak from my own knowledge, Caillet, and not from the tales of any one, however true those tales might be. But why should I pause upon one instance? Do not you, as well as I, know a thousand such acts? You do not doubt them any more than I do, Caillet. You but affect to do so."

"Nay," answered Caillet, "I neither doubt nor affect a doubt. Have I not already said that I hold her to be worthy of the love of any one? and only grieve, good Albert, that you are mad enough to love her, or foolish enough not to take the way of winning her."

"Winning her!" exclaimed the other, with an indignant scoff; "you are indeed mad now, Caillet, to talk of such a thing. We have heard, it is true, of rich peasants marrying the daughters of poor lords; and the fabliau of the Villein and the Lady shows us how the daughter of a noble can shrink from such a union. But for a poor peasant like me, depending solely upon his lord's bounty, without even a claim to that—as I was not born on this good lord's lands; for one whom he first received and protected from charity, whom he has educated from kindness, and who is wholly indebted to

him for his daily bread ; for such a one, I say, to dream of winning one whom the whole country is ready to seek ; for whom knights, and nobles, and the princes of the land might well lay lance in rest, were somewhat worse than madness, Caillet. Try not to put such visions into my mind. You know, as well as I, that such things are quite impossible."

"I know the contrary," replied Caillet, in a calm, determined tone. "I know that they are possible, quite possible ; but I will admit that they are impossible to you, for you will not take the means to bring that prize within your reach which is but at a short distance from your grasp. I see that it is so ; and though I do not regret that I have spoken to you thus, yet I fear, Albert, I fear for your own happiness that it will be in vain. Come, let us go back."

Thus saying, he rose, and walked slowly towards the castle, with his companion at his side, both musing and silent for some way, though Caillet, notwithstanding the air of indifference which he assumed, watched the countenance of Albert eagerly though stealthily, and tried to read thereon each passing emotion which the dangerous words he had uttered called up in his young comrade's heart. He spoke not, however, thinking that he had said enough for the day, and that at some after-period he might return to the same theme.

But Albert himself was too much moved by all that he had heard to let the subject drop there ; and, ere they had reached the foot of the slope, he said, "Would to Heaven, Caillet, that you had not spoken to me all you have this day, or that you had said more."

"I will add more, if you desire it," replied his companion. "I know that with you I am safe in uttering all that I think ; but as to your wishing that I had not spoken at all, that is a weak wish, good Albert. Why should you entertain it ! Is it because I have made you look into your own heart, and see things in it that you never beheld before ? Is it because I have made you look around at your situation, and shown you that you are placed within reach of honour and happiness, where great glory and joy, and a bright name are to be gained, if you will but seek them, although there be difficulties and dangers in the way, strong resolutions to be taken, and great exertions to be made—"

"I fear no difficulties, I fear no great exertions," ex-

claimed Albert, eagerly ; "but you have not shown me this—"

Caillet went on, however, without heeding, his fine countenance assuming an expression even more stern than that which it usually bore. "Or is it because I have placed before your eyes that which every Frenchman should know, whatever be his rank, whatever be his class, namely, the dreadful state to which the land has been reduced by the baseness of the class that call themselves noble ; because I have shown you how shamefully they abuse the power that they shamefully possess, how the poor peasant groans throughout the land, and how dark a debt of crime and sorrow is daily accumulating against the rich, the powerful, and the great, which must one day be paid, and that ere many years be past ?"

Albert heard the latter part of Caillet's speech in silence ; but in the end replied, after musing a moment or two over what had been said, "Caillet, I do not understand you clearly ; but it is none of all these things that I wish I had never heard. The words you have spoken this day have kindled thoughts in my mind which but for you could never have been there. You are right well aware that hope once roused can sleep no more, and that whatever she has seized remains in her grasp forever. Why or wherefore, you know best ; but I see, Caillet, I see clearly that you have carefully tried to raise hopes up in my bosom which should never be there, and which it must now be the study of my life to forget. Would to Heaven you had never done this ! But as you have, you must tell me why it has been done ; why you should seek to encourage feelings that you know can but make me miserable—thoughts that are worse than idle vanity—that are wicked, presumptuous, evil !"

Caillet gazed upon him for a moment in silence ere he replied, with a look that had something contemptuous in it. The expression of scorn, indeed, was so constantly upon his countenance, that it was difficult to tell whether the curl of his lip proceeded from some secret emotion of the mind, or merely from an accidental movement of the features : but Albert, who knew him well, saw that look, and was not pleased with it ; and, although it passed away in a moment, he remembered it when it was gone, and recalled it afterward, when

many circumstances had changed their relative position to each other.

"My answer to your question," said Caillet, at length, "is very simple. I have done all this that you say in the hope of promoting your happiness. I have done it because the feelings that you speak of need not necessarily produce evil, or sorrow, or disappointment; because, if you would yield to reason, give your own mind sway, and exert those talents that God has bestowed upon you, the very wishes and the hopes that you entertain might lead to the greatest results, and be beneficial both to yourself and to your country."

"Still, still," replied Albert, "I know not what you mean. I must hear more, Caillet; I must hear all."

"You shall," answered Caillet, "you shall hear all, Albert, and I would fain tell you all now; but, lo! there comes the train of the good prior over the hill, and we must both return to the chateau. One word, then, for all, before we go. The state of misery in which France exists cannot endure much longer; the bondage in which we, the peasantry of France, are kept must soon come to an end. Ere long, the rights now withheld will be struggled for and regained; men will recover the privileges of men, and will cast from them the yoke of others not more worthy than themselves. We are on the eve of great events; and when they come to pass, if you but choose the side of honour and freedom, you will win your own happiness, as well as give happiness to thousands. I ask you to take no active part," he continued, seeing a cloud come over his companion's brow at the vague hints which he gave; "I ask you to take no active part *as yet*, but merely to watch events as they arise, to judge sanely, and act nobly."

As soon as he had uttered these words, Caillet—fearful that anything more might startle and alarm his companion—left what he had said to work out its effect, and to familiarize the mind of Albert Denyn with thoughts of change and strife, with which ideas he had, as we have seen, contrived to mingle hopes and expectations the most likely to have effect upon a young and inexperienced mind. Without pausing, then, to permit any farther questions to be addressed to him at the time, he hurried his pace back towards the castle, which they reached not long before the arrival of the train of horsemen whom they had seen coming over the hill.

## CHAPTER V.

THE sweet hours of the morning! There is nothing on earth like the sweet hours of the morning! It is the youth of the day; and the childhood of all things is beautiful. The freshness, the unpolluted freshness of infancy, hangs about the early moments of the dawn; the air seems to breathe of innocence and truth; the very light is instinct with youth, and speaks of hopes. Who is there that loves beauty and brightness, and does not enjoy the early hours of the morning?

Such, at least, was not the case with the Captal de Buch. Of all the heroic followers of that heroic prince, whose deeds occupy so great a space in the annals of British glory, one of the most feeling, one of the most imaginative, one of the most chivalrous, in the best and highest sense of the word, was that famous leader, who led the small body of horse which by a sudden and unexpected charge contributed so much to win the battle of Poitiers. His whole life proved it, and his death not less so.

Although I know not that he has left anything like verse behind, yet it is evident that his heart overflowed with the true spirit of poetry; and often in the camp or the fortress, when he had spent a great part of the night in watching, he would rise betimes, like any common soldier in the army, to mark the bright dawning of the day, and enjoy all the fresh beauties of the early morning. It was so even now in the castle of Mauvinet; and with the first stirrers in the place he was on foot, and gazing forth from the window of his chamber upon the clear, gray coming of the autumnal day. Each object that his eye rested on suggested some new train of thought, excited some fresh current of feelings; and he stood for more than an hour, sometimes turning his eyes upon the soldiers below, as they wrestled and pitched the bar, sometimes gazing up towards the hills, and marking the gleams and shadows which the floating clouds cast upon the meadows and the woods.

In his fanciful mood he compared those meadows and woods to man and his ever-changing fate and fortunes; now looking bright and smiling, now plunged into gloom

and obscurity; and all by objects which are but vapour, blown hither and thither by the breath of accident. For the autumn colours of the woods, too, he would have a likeness; and he thought that that rich brown was like the hue of mature life, when the vigorous fruits of judgment and experience are succeeding to the green leaves and fresh flowers of youth. All things, in short, excited his imagination at that moment even more than was usually the case; for the fair being with whom he had passed a few short hours on the preceding night had awakened sensations, which always, more or less, rouse fancy from her slumbers even in the most dull and unideal breast.

As he thus stood and gazed, he marked the youth who had conducted him thither on the preceding night, walking forward, as we have shown, with his companion towards the hill; and when once his eye had lighted on him, he continued to look after him, not exactly watching his movements, but with a certain feeling of interest for which it was difficult to account.

"It is strange," he said to himself, after a time, "it is strange how we sometimes feel towards persons, the first time we behold them, sensations totally different from those which we ever experience towards others: affection, dislike, confidence, esteem! I remember once being told by an old priest, who thought much of such things, that when we find such an interest suddenly arise in our hearts, without being able to discover any real cause, either reasonable or unreasonable, we may be sure that our fate is in some way connected with that of the person who has excited it; and that sooner or later, perhaps many years after, our weal or woe will be affected by our acquaintance with him. I must hear more of that youth; for it is strange why I should experience sensations towards him different from those called forth by any other peasant that one meets with every day. Who is that with him, I wonder? a tall, powerful fellow, who would make a good billman in case of need."

The captal continued to gaze for some time, till at length a server, with one of his own attendants, summoned him to breakfast; and, descending, he found the whole of the party of the castle assembled in the hall, except the young Lady Adela, who sent him kindly greeting, but did not appear herself.

An old knight, whose years and station placed him highest in the household of the Seneschal of Touraine, led the capital by the hand to the seat of honour, and then sat down beside him. But, as it is not the object of this book to describe the particular customs of the day, and rather its intent to deal with the men than the manners of the times, I shall pass over all the ceremonies of the breakfast, though those were days in which ceremonies were not few, and proceed at once to the moment when the capital, having finished his meal and washed his hands, the old knight we have mentioned invited him, in his lady's name, to visit her in her own apartment.

The capital followed willingly enough; and when he saw Adela de Mauvinet by the morning light, he thought her still more beautiful than on the preceding night. Her young brother was with her; and again and again they both thanked him, not only for the good tidings that he had brought, but for the kindness which had prompted him to bring them that intelligence himself. The capital, according to the custom of the day, denied all merit, but yet was not sorry to hear such words from such lips; and as the boy was very like his sister, he bestowed on him the caresses that he could not offer to her. A short time thus passed joyfully; but the interview was not destined to be long uninterrupted; for a few minutes after, the door opened, and Albert Denyn appeared, with a familiarity that somewhat surprised the capital.

He was received by the lady with a smile, which for an instant made a strange feeling of displeasure pass through the warrior's heart, though he would have laughed if any one had told him he was in love with the lady, or jealous of the peasant page. The demeanour of the youth himself was all respect and reverence; his countenance was grave, and even melancholy, and all his tones were sad.

"I come, lady," he said, as soon as he entered, "to tell you that my lord the prior must be even now at the gates. I saw him riding over the hill with a large train, and hastened to inform you, as I thought you might wish to meet him on the steps."

"Oh! yes, yes!" cried the Lady Adela, joyfully, "let us go, let us go! You know my dear uncle already, my Lord Capital," she continued, "and can well judge what joy his presence gives me whenever he can come hither."

"I have seen him but once, sweet lady," replied the captal; "but after that once I need no assurance that his disposition is one to win love as well as respect from all who know him well."

"You do him but justice," replied the lady, suffering him to take her hand to lead her down, "you do him but justice, as you will each day feel more and more, when longer acquaintance shows you his heart more fully."

The train of the prior had not yet passed the causeway when the Lady Adela, the captal, and the lady's brother, followed by Albert Denyn, reached the steps which led from the great gates down to the open space between it and the barbican. A number of the retainers of the castle were already congregated there to receive the brother of their lord; but, with confusion somewhat unusual, they were gathered into separate groups, speaking low together, and fixing their eyes with a degree of anxiety upon the troop that approached, which was certainly larger than the train with which the good prior generally travelled. All made way, however, for the lady and her company, and she paused upon the steps while the new-comers advanced across the causeway three abreast, and then passed the barbican.

As they came nearer, however, the eye of the captal lighted up with a look of eagerness. The young Lord of Mauvinet laid his hand suddenly upon his sister's arm, and the next instant Adela herself, with a cry of joy, darted down the steps like lightning, and in a moment was clasped in the arms of a noble-looking man, who followed close upon the right of the prior. Her little brother sprang after her as fast as his young limbs would carry him, and he also, with tears of pleasure, was pressed to his father's heart, while the acclamations of the retainers round about rent the air; and the glad faces that everywhere presented themselves told how truly loved a feudal lord might make himself, if he chose to exercise the great power that he possessed with benevolence and humanity.

As soon as he had received the welcome of his children, the Lord of Mauvinet turned to the Captal de Buch, and greeted him as a well-loved friend; but his next salutation, to the surprise of that nobleman, was given to the youth Albert Denyn. To him the count extended his hand; and though the youth bent down to

kiss it respectfully, the seneschal pressed his with fatherly kindness, saying, "I have heard, Albert, of all that you did to discover me, or, at least, to find my bones, at the peril of your own life and liberty. I knew, my boy, that your love would not fail me, and I thank you much."

The young man heard him in silence, without venturing a word in reply; but tears rose in his eyes, while his look spoke how happy his lord's commendation made him; and, bowing low, he retired speedily among the throng, with a reverence to the prior as he passed, and one brief glance towards the capital and the Lady Adela.

From feelings that he could not explain, the capital watched the youth with perhaps more attention than he had ever bestowed on any person of the same rank; but, just and generous under all circumstances, he admitted to his own heart that the young man's demeanour fully justified that affection and esteem which the whole family of his lord displayed towards him.

As may well be supposed, after his long absence and supposed death, there was many a one to claim the Lord of Mauvinet's attention, and to congratulate him upon his return; and for all he had some kindly word, which sent them away content with the attention which they had received. Among the rest, the baron remarked Caillet, spoke to him kindly and familiarly, but not in the same tones of confidence and regard which he had used towards Albert Denyn. His notice, however, called the attention of the capital to the striking person of the young peasant; and he gazed at him for some time, examining with keen and experienced eyes a countenance which might well afford matter of curious speculation.

It would appear that the result was not satisfactory to the capital, for his brow became slightly contracted; and, walking beside the prior's mule, he asked him, "Who is that strong, well-looking youth, my Lord Prior, with whom your brother is now speaking?"

"His name is Caillet," replied the prior: "he is a young man of great talent, born on my brother's estates in Beauvoisis. The good chaplain tried to make a priest of him, but failed: not for want of quickness on the part of his scholar, but from somewhat too great quickness, and a strength of determination not easily mastered. What he thought fit to study he acquired with sur-

prising ease, and much he learned that good Father Robert would fain have prevented; but what he did not choose to apply to, nothing on earth would make him look at."

"I should judge so," replied the captal, "from his face: a sturdy and determined spirit is written in every line, and no slight opinion of himself."

"He is not humble," replied the prior, but made no other comment.

When they had passed on into the chateau, one of the first tasks of its lord was to beseech the Captal de Buch to spend some short time as a guest in the castle of Mauvinet; and, to say the truth, the captal had no strong inclination to refuse; for bright eyes were there, which had about them a strange fascination that the heart of the gallant knight was not well calculated to resist. He agreed willingly, then, to spend ten days with his noble prisoner in the forest sports of those times; and the Lord of Mauvinet sincerely rejoiced to secure the society of one whom he had learned to love and to respect during the tedious hours of his captivity in England.

Let us leave the count for a time, however, in the embraces of his children and the first delights of his return, and turn to others with whom we shall have more to do than even with that nobleman himself. The captal, on his part, knew that there are moments when the society of any one, however friendly, may be a restraint upon feelings which require full indulgence; and not long after they had entered the castle he drew the prior of Montvoye aside, saying, "You have ridden far this morning, my good Lord Prior, otherwise I would claim your company for a walk in the sunshine yonder under the castle wall; but if you will be a guest of my chamber for half an hour, I would fain ask you a question or two about my young guide of last night, and make you a proposal about him which may perhaps meet your views and his, perhaps not, but which you shall decide when you have heard it fully."

"I am no way fatigued, my good lord," replied the prior, "and will willingly be the comrade of your walk. Albert is as good a youth as ever lived, and right gladly shall I hear anything for his advantage."

Leaving the count and his children, then, alone, the prior and the captal issued forth, and took their way through the many square courts of the castle—into the

depth of which, enclosed as they were by tall buildings, the sunshine rarely found its way except at noon—till they issued forth by one of the posterns upon the meadow under the walls, which we have already more than once mentioned. They there again paused to gaze at the scene around, both enjoying greatly the picturesque beauties of the landscape.

It would be an egregious mistake to suppose that in that age, however rude and barbarous in some respects, there did not exist a love for, and fine appreciation of, all that is beautiful in this world, in which our lot is cast. The very architecture of the time shows that such a feeling of the graceful and the sublime existed: the fifteenth century followed soon after, with all its miracles of art; and even at the time of which I speak there were many persons living who had in their own bosoms as much of the spirit of the picturesque as a Prout or a Turner, though they had not a knowledge of how to represent for others that which they felt so keenly.

After having gazed, then, for some moments over the fair prospect which was to be seen from the meadow, the captal turned to the prior to resume the subject of their discourse, first commenting for a moment, as was natural, on that which had just occupied his attention. "This is as sweet a spot, my Lord Prior," he said, "as ever I beheld—calm, bright, and beautiful!"

"Heaven keep it peaceful, too!" replied the prior. "We have, as yet, luckily escaped here many of the horrors of war; and I trust it may be long ere we know anything of that desolating power. But you, of course, noble captal," he continued, "cannot look upon the sad pursuits of strife with the same horror that I do."

"I suppose not, good father," replied the captal: "each man has in this world his vocation; and I cannot but think that war, when honourably waged and justly undertaken, is the most noble calling that man can have. So it would seem, too, thinks the youth of whom we were speaking. From what you said, I took an interest in him, and I asked him some questions on the road last night. His answers pleased me well: he seems frank and true. But I have lived long enough in the world, good prior, to know that frankness is sometimes assumed as one of the *cunningest* cloaks for *cunning*—and I would fain know from you what is this youth's real disposition?"

"He is truth and honour itself, my lord," replied the prior. "In no rank have I ever found so much sincerity, so much unvarying uprightness of heart, so scrupulous a regard for plighted faith, so knightly a scorn of falsehood."

"The character you give him is high, indeed," replied the captal; "doubtless, too, he is brave—at least he has the air, the eye of a brave man."

"Ay, and the heart," answered the prior. "After that sad field of Poitiers, when terror and consternation spread over the whole kingdom, and every day brought past this place parties of fugitives, each full of wild tales of English bands pursuing, ravaging the country round, and slaying all they met with—when the dauphin himself scarcely dared to pause for half an hour to take some light refreshment here, and when his own attendants told the same tale of the whole land being covered by your troops—that lad, when no other would go, went boldly to the very field of Poitiers itself to seek his lord, and at no persuasion would take the cognizance of the house of Mauvinet from his bonnet."

"He was quite safe!" said the captal; "we warred not with peasants."

"True, my lord, true, my lord," replied the prior; "but that sad disease, terror, has its delirium, like all other fevers; and our peasantry fled as fast, or even faster, than many of their lords. It was vain to argue, it was vain to reason with them. Day after day brought new rumours, each more wild and foolish than the former. No man consulted his understanding, no man believed aught but the last tale of terror which the day brought forth; and in some parts of the country the fields and villages were quite deserted. Why, the very ferries over the river were in many places left without boats or boatmen. But in the midst of all this Albert pursued his way, and searched for his lord, far and near, for several weeks."

"He is such as I thought him," replied the captal; "and what I was going to propose as a favour to him, I shall now ask, my good lord, as a favour to myself. His taste, it seems, is for arms. In France he can never hope to rise higher than a mere common soldier of some commune, or, at best, the constable of a band of burghesses. In England such distinctions are not to be found. The noble, it is true, is still noble; but we have

no such things as villeins ; they have been long done away in that land, though at one time the custom did exist there as well as in France. With us in Gascony there are villeins enough ; but if you will give the youth to me, he shall serve in my band till I can get him better service in England. And as I must pass my leisure time, while this truce exists, in seeking some feats of arms elsewhere, doubtless he may gain some renown, which will obtain for him consideration in a country where great deeds are always honoured, let the doer of them be who he may. This is the proposal that I have to make, my Lord Prior, in regard to your young client. I thought of offering it last night, when you spoke about his wish for arms, but I judged it better to wait till I had seen farther. What say you : shall it be so ?”

Somewhat to the surprise of the Captal de Buch, the prior hesitated ere he replied, and then answered, “ I must consult my brother first, my good lord. It is he who brought up the youth ; not I ; he has only been resident with me since the battle, when I thought it best that he should be at the abbey.”

“ May I inquire, good father,” demanded the captal, “ was there anything in his conduct to show that he could not be trusted except under your eye ?”

“ No, no !” answered the prior, eagerly ; “ nothing of the kind, my good lord. But my brother, who had his own views for him, being supposed dead, I saw no fate before him but the cloister or the priest’s office, and it was with the object of providing for him thus that I took him. Now, however, that the count has returned in safety, he, of course, must act as before, and I must either refer you to him, or consult with him upon the subject myself, before I give you a reply.”

“ Consult with him, by all means,” answered the captal ; “ if you think what I have proposed advantageous for the youth, well. I am ready to do my best for him ; if not, it is well also ; only I do beseech you, my good Lord Prior, do not make him a priest against his will ; for if you do, the community will suffer fully as much as himself.”

“ Far be it from me,” replied the prior, smiling ; “ and I feel very sure that I might at once accept your offer ; for I know that my brother seeks nothing but Albert’s good, and your proposal is most generous and kind. Nevertheless, there are some things to be considered,

of which I will speak with you more hereafter ; but, in the mean time, I thank you gratefully on Albert's part for the bounty that you show him."

The capital bowed somewhat stiffly ; for, from what the prior had said the day before, he had not doubted that he would eagerly avail himself of any means to promote the young peasant's wishes for a military life. And it must be remembered that the offer of the knight was one that might well be received with gladness, even by a youth of the very highest rank. Renown in arms was then the first claim to reverence from all classes ; and the fame of the capital as a commander was scarcely second to that of any one in the days wherein he lived. In that famous order of chivalry, which, both from its priority in point of time, and the renown of those who have borne it, leaves every other but a mere shadow—I mean the order of the Garter—his name stands fifth among the founders, and with only one subject between him and princes of the royal blood ; and in those times that distinction was held far higher than even now. Well might the capital think that the offer he made in favour of a mere French peasant was one of no slight kindness ; and well might he feel somewhat surprised that the prior should receive it with any hesitation, however slight. He pressed the matter no farther, then, at the time ; but, after speaking gravely with his companion on other subjects, he returned with him to the hall, jested for a few minutes with some of the French gentlemen present, displayed his great muscular powers and skill in one or two feats of strength, and then, retiring to his chamber, was heard singing to an instrument of music, which was always borne with him by one of his train. At dinner, too, he was somewhat grave ; but afterward, as the shades of evening were beginning to fall, he was seen walking with the prior and the Count of Mauvinet, and bearing a lighter countenance, while all three spoke in somewhat low tones together, and the attendants kept far behind. They were at this time beyond the great moat, and under a small hanging wood. As they proceeded, something was heard to rustle among the brown leaves within earshot of the pages. "There is a wolf!" cried one of the boys, throwing a stone into the covert ; but the sound instantly ceased, and they passed on.

## CHAPTER VI.

NEARLY a fortnight passed over in the chateau of Mauvinet without any one incident worthy of remark, and yet there is much to tell. The small things of life are often more important than the great, the slow than the quick, the still than the noisy. The castle, and the palace, and the church stand for years the raging of the wind, the beating of the rain, the red bolt of the lightning, yet crumble down beneath the quiet touch of time, without any one seeing where and when the fell destroyer is at work. There may well be no great incident, and yet a change the most happy or the most disastrous may have taken place in the space of a few short days.

There was then, as we have said, much to tell, though there was no marked event upon which the pen of the narrator can dwell. There had been forest sports, the hunting of the boar and the wolf; there had been the flight of the falcon over the valleys and the plains around; there had been gay autumnal evenings within the castle walls, with the blazing fire, and the cheerful tale, and the song of chivalry and love, and the sharp *sirvente*, and sometimes the merry dance. In fact, the time had passed so gayly, that one might almost have forgotten the terrible state of the country around, had it not been that from time to time a report reached the castle of outrages committed by this and that band of marauders; and once rumour brought the adventurers so near that the Lord of Mauvinet and the Captal de Buch both rode out armed to give them the encounter, and drive them forth from Touraine. The report proved false, however, and was, in fact, merely one of those tales of terror which circulated from mouth to mouth throughout the land.

On all these things it is unnecessary to dwell longer, as they afford no matter of interest but for those who may be inclined to study deeply the manners of the times; but day by day, and hour by hour, and moment by moment, feelings were coming into the bosom of the Captal de Buch such as he had never before experienced.

Ere a week was over he had fully determined to demand the hand of Adela de Mauvinet, and the rest of the fortnight he employed in eagerly seeking her regard.

Love in a young and timid man may often, from its very newness and intensity, baffle its own endeavours; it may obscure high talents and bright qualities, and weigh down the eager and the ardent spirit, and even the active and powerful mind, so that the lover may appear in the very worst light to the person he most wishes to please; but with knowledge and experience of the world, and that confidence in one's own powers, that just appreciation of ourselves which nothing but such knowledge of the world can give, love produces none of those results, but, on the contrary, stimulates every nerve to exertion, acuminates every faculty of the mind and the body, and teaches us to display to the very best advantage every grace or perfection that we may happen to possess.

Such, then, was the case with the Captal de Buch; he certainly loved deeply and well; he felt for Adela what he had never felt for any one else, and his whole mind was bent upon obtaining her regard. But those very sensations only induced him to put forth his great power of pleasing, called into activity the vigour of his mind, and taught him to use all those means which, he knew right well, are the most successful with the female heart. He was constantly by her side when the opportunity naturally presented itself. The tone of his conversation was that which seemed best to accord with the general character of her own mind; and yet the brilliancy of his thoughts, the richness of idea which had been acquired by seeing many scenes, mingling with many events, and frequenting many courts, gave a sort of sparkling effect to his conversation, even when, as I have said, it took its general hue from the character of her with whom he spoke. It was as if his mind was a magic mirror which reflected hers, but gave additional brightness to all the images it received.

And yet—for generally in this world there is some fatal abatement to the pleasure of the day—and yet there was something in the manner of Adela that surprised, disappointed, and grieved the captal. That she did not dislike his society was evident; that his words, his manners, and accomplishments were justly appreciated by her, was also clear; but still there was an in-

describable something in her manner which showed him that he did not make that progress in her heart which he so ardently desired.

On almost all subjects she spoke with him willingly, cheerfully; but there was one on which she spoke not at all. When he talked of love she was silent; love, I mean, in the abstract, or with reference to others; for his own love towards her he had never yet ventured to tell. The moment the subject was mentioned, Adela replied not unless she was forced to do so, and, when such was the case, answered but vaguely, and generally fell into a fit of musing, from which the capital found it difficult to rouse her. He knew not how to account for such conduct; it appeared to him strange, and certainly alarmed him; but still he was quite sufficiently in love to listen eagerly to anything that hope whispered. He thought to himself, "She is so young, she knows not yet what love is;" and still he went on in the same course, with little fear of ultimate success.

To those who knew her well, however, a change might be seen in Adela herself; she had become graver, more thoughtful, at times even somewhat sad. She showed no distaste to the society of the capital: how could she to that of a man who had saved her father's life, who had been his friend in adversity, and who had cheered for him the hours of captivity and sorrow! but still there was not that alacrity in going forth with him which might have been expected from her character in times of old. The bounding joy with which at one time she would have sprung to meet the deliverer of her parent was no longer seen.

The count himself remarked that it was so, and he too thought it strange, although he doubted not, and could not doubt, the affection of his child. Still it struck him as extraordinary, the more so, indeed, from all he knew of Adela's character. There were others who marked the difference likewise, and on whom it made the same impression. To Adela no one said anything, however; and she remained not only unconscious that the coldness in her demeanour towards the capital had been perceived, but, in truth, unconscious that there was a coldness. Had she known it she would certainly have been greatly grieved; but whether she would have changed or not, who can say?

Thus passed the time with her. With her father it  
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might be somewhat different. It seldom happens, I believe, that parents, even the most anxious and careful, become aware of the attachment which their children inspire, or of the affections which they feel, till the time to prevent the danger is over. Loving Adela as he did, the count thought naturally that she was worthy of all admiration; and in the captal's attention towards her he saw nothing but what might naturally be expected from so gallant a knight towards so fair a lady. In the end, indeed, he thought that there was sometimes a sparkling brightness in his guest's eyes, which betrayed a greater degree of warmth than the mere courtesy of the day required; but he marked it little, though others marked it much; and he gave no thought to the question of whether it would please him well to see his daughter united to the great English leader.

There was another, in regard to whom we must also trace the passing of the time, although he may seem a very insignificant personage among those of whom we have been lately speaking. That personage was Albert Denyn, and he had also undergone a change; he too had become sad, and thoughtful, and gloomy. Smiles had nearly forsaken his countenance since the captal entered the castle of Mauvinet: and he was seen, day by day, wandering through the woods and over the hills around, with his eyes fixed upon the dull ground, as if questioning his mother earth of his hard destiny, and finding no reply; or sitting gazing on the hilt of the sword, which he, as well as Caillet, and several other favourite attendants of the Lord of Mauvinet, were permitted to wear, as if demanding why the hand which could use it as bravely as any lord in the land, should not be held as noble as that of others less worthy.

He seemed to avoid the society of all. The tiltyard and the meadow, where the soldiery used to practise, and where he himself had a sort of prescriptive right to mingle with others of noble birth, now beheld him no more; and even Caillet, who, though he in general sought conversation with few in the castle, now looked for every opportunity of speaking with him, found none without great difficulty, and even when he did obtain a moment, met with some interruption almost as soon as their conference began.

The captal, from motives secret even to himself, watched the young peasant whenever he happened to

be in the same chamber with him, and more especially when Adela was there; but he saw nothing but what the youth's station in the household of the lady's father warranted. There was deep respect and reverence, zeal and affection in his manner; but humble and calm withal, without presumption in look or word.

The captal took it for granted, in the end, that the youth's melancholy was habitual; but others knew better; and more than one of those who had been accustomed to see him the gayest of a thousand gay hearts, now questioned him regarding his sudden gloom. Among the rest was the prior; but the good father—forced to reside at the abbey, and paying but short visits to his brother's castle—saw not many of those slighter traits which might, perhaps, have directed his judgment aright, could he have watched them; and thus he attributed Albert's sadness to motives far from the real ones.

"My dear son," he said, one day, when he was riding over to the castle, and found the youth upon the hills by the way, "I have remarked, with grief, the gloom that hangs upon you; for I cannot but ascribe it, in some degree, to what my brother and myself have yielded to, out of kindness for you, without dreaming that it could produce pain and sorrow instead."

The youth started and turned red, but instantly became pale, demanding, "What mean you, father? I know not to what you can allude."

"Nay! my son," answered the prior, "I saw this sadness fall upon you the moment we mentioned what we considered the splendid offer made in your favour by the noble Captal de Buch; and I have marked the gloom coming deeper and deeper every day since, so that I cannot be mistaken."

Albert paused a moment, but his heart was too pure and true to suffer him to take advantage of the good prior's mistake, even to hide the many feelings within his bosom that he dared not avow; and in this, as in all things, he spoke the plain truth. "Indeed, dear and noble sir," he said, "you are mistaken. When you told me of the generous offer of the captal, I became grave, perhaps, because my heart was filled with two strong emotions: joy to see what I had scarcely deemed possible fulfilled, and yet sorrow to part with many dear and true friends such as I shall never find again. Oh!

my lord, can you suppose that, after all the kindness you have shown me, I can think of the hour that must separate me from your paternal care, perhaps forever, without a painful feeling of apprehension and regret? Can I ever think of leaving my noble lord, your brother, or our sweet Lady Adela, without deep grief? Oh! no, my lord. This, I assure you, was all that called a shadow over my face when first you told me of the capital's offer; and, since then, perhaps other things—fancies—wayward fancies—apprehensions of never seeing those I love again, or seeing them changed towards me—or—or—a thousand idle dreams, have made me sad; but this will all pass away when I am gone.”

“Fear not! Albert,” replied the prior, gazing on him with a look of approbation and regard, “fear not! We shall meet again, and, perhaps, in happier circumstances than the times admit at present. Fear not, either, that you will find us changed. We are not of a race that change. Only act honourably wherever you may be, and you will learn that we are still the same under all circumstances.”

“I trust I ever shall act honourably, my lord,” replied Albert. “I have but one apprehension, and that is, that I may at some time be compelled to lay down those arms which I am now about to bear, by being called to use them against France; and should that be—”

“No fear! no fear!” exclaimed the prior: “the capital has plighted his word that such an act shall never be required of you, my son. If that idea has disturbed you, let it do so no more; for you know that his word is never broken.”

The youth kissed the good monk's hand in sign of gratitude; but, notwithstanding such assurance, Albert was not gayer than before. For the day, indeed, he made an effort, but ere night fell he had sunk back into deeper gloom than ever. Even in the hall, after supper, a dark fit of thought came upon him, and he stood silent and sad, with his gaze fixed upon the pavement, while all were laughing and jesting around, till, suddenly raising his head, he found the eyes of the Lady Adela resting upon him with a look little less sorrowful than his own. He started and turned away, and strove for the rest of the evening to assume a more cheerful air when he passed the spot where she sat; but the sight of the Capital de Buch placed beside her, and striving by every

means to win her attention and regard, was not calculated to cheer the heart of Albert Denyn.

On the morning following, however, from one of the windows at which he had watched the sun rise with eyes that had not been closed all night, he beheld the captal and the Lord of Mauvinet walk forth together unattended; and knowing that at that hour the great hall of the castle was likely to be vacant, he proceeded thither to indulge his thoughts more at ease than in the narrow space of the small room which he tenanted in one of the turrets. Intense thought may take place in narrow chambers; the mathematician may pursue his calculations, the philosopher his reasonings, the politician his schemes, within the straitest confines; but, where strong emotions of the heart mingle with the deep workings of the brain, the spirit within us seems to pant for space, and the movement of the mind requires room for the movements also of the corporeal frame. Albert Denyn felt relieved in the great hall, where he could now be quite solitary: it seemed as if the busy thoughts within his bosom found freer play. There he walked to and fro for some minutes alone, stopping from time to time to gaze out of the window, till at length, seeing the captal and the count on their way back towards the chateau, he paused for a moment to consider whether he would wait their coming where he was, or retire again to his own chamber. He felt, however, that his thoughts at that moment were too painful to endure the presence of others, and, turning away, he passed along the corridor which led from room to room by the principal apartments of the castle, intending to mount to the turret in which he slept by a small staircase at the end.

Ere he reached the farther extremity of the gallery, however, he beheld the Lady Adela coming towards him, and for an instant he hesitated what to do; but he soon saw that she had remarked his presence, and he advanced, making a lowly bow as he approached her.

Adela, however, paused when he came near, cast a hurried glance around the corridor to assure herself that they were alone, and then said, "Albert, what is it that makes you so sad? Why are you so changed, so gloomy? Has anything gone wrong with you?"

"Nothing, lady; nothing, indeed," replied Albert; "far from it; all has gone well—well in a way that I could not hope."

"Then what is the cause of your gloom, Albert?" she asked; "what is the occasion of the melancholy that hangs upon you?"

Albert Denyn was shaken with agitation so that his very limbs trembled; his countenance was as pale as death, and his breath seemed to come hard. Adela marked all those signs of strong emotion, and as he did not answer, she added, in a gentle tone, "Nay, nay, Albert, you must speak: we have been brought up together almost all our lives, and you will not surely refuse to tell me—me, Albert—me you will not refuse to tell!"

Albert could bear no more. "You! you!" he exclaimed; "oh! lady, you are the last that I ought to tell!"

The words had scarcely passed his lips when the Captal de Buch entered the gallery alone and thoughtful, with his eyes bent upon the ground. The moment he came in, however, he raised his head, and saw Albert Denyn advancing towards him, while the Lady Adela turned away with a glowing cheek and agitated air. But Albert had at once regained his calmness as soon as he became aware of the presence of a third person, for there was a depth in his sorrow which gave vigour to every effort of his mind; and he came slowly but firmly on towards the captal, reaching the spot where the knight stood at the very moment that Adela quitted the corridor by another door.

In those days there was a sort of parental power in great military leaders over the young men who attached themselves to them, which gave a right to question and to govern them in a way that might not otherwise have been submitted to by hot and fiery spirits in the heyday of youth. It was in this tone, rather than in that of a master, that the Captal de Buch now addressed Albert Denyn, saying, "What has agitated the lady, my young friend?"

The captal himself was not free from emotion as he spoke; but Albert replied calmly, "Why she is agitated, my lord, I cannot pretend to inform you. All that passed was, that she was kind enough to ask what had made me so sad, and whether anything had gone wrong with me. I assured her that such was not the case; but she would not believe my assurance; though, as you know, my lord, from your own noble offer, all has gone better with me than I ever could have dared to hope."

The captal bit his lip, and then fixing his eyes upon the ground, remained in thought for a moment or two. He had thus continued till Albert doubted whether he ought to retire or wait his farther commands, when, raising his eyes proudly, the knight added, "If you are still inclined to accept my offer, young man, it would be as well for you to know that I shall not remain here many days longer; perhaps even to-morrow may be fixed for my departure. Are you still desirous of accompanying me, or not?"

Albert gazed in the captal's face with evident surprise. "Most gratefully! most thankfully! noble sir," he said: "I should ill deserve your favour did I even hesitate."

"You are the best judge," replied the captal, in a sharp tone, and passed on towards his own apartments.

Albert remained for a moment or two where the captal had left him, and then retiring to his own chamber, spent an hour in thought.

Ere we turn to new events, however, and more active scenes than those in which we have lately engaged, we must pause to relate the conversation which had taken place between the Captal de Buch and the Count de Mauvinet during their morning walk; a conversation which, as we have seen, had made the former forget in a degree that courteous kindness for which he had ever been celebrated.

Not unmerited praises of the Lady Adela de Mauvinet, on the part of the captal, began his conference with the count; and her father certainly heard those praises with pleasure, although by this time he had learned to apprehend some proposal on the part of his friend, which might give him pain either to refuse or to accede to. He replied, however, cautiously, and in such a manner as he thought might perhaps check expectation; but the captal went on and told the tale of his love, ending with a demand of the hand of Adela de Mauvinet. It often requires more courage to encounter a painful proposition such as this than any corporeal danger; and the Lord of Mauvinet would more willingly have met an enemy in the field than have heard the wishes of the Captal de Buch.

Nevertheless, when it was once pronounced, he met it decidedly. "My noble lord," he replied, "and my dear good friend, it would be less grievous to me far to lie

once more upon the field of Poitiers among the dead and dying than to say what I must say. If I had been asked not many months ago," he proceeded, sadly, "whether I would ever consent to give my child to one who had aided, as much as any man now living, to overthrow the hosts of France at Poitiers, I would have answered, No; it is a thing utterly impossible—of which I can never dream. Those feelings have been changed by your generous kindness. But if any one asks me even now whether I will consent to give my daughter to a man who still remains an enemy of my country, I must repeat those words, No! it is impossible! Could you, my Lord Captal, quit the cause of England, espouse the cause of France, cast from you all the ties that have long bound you, and become a faithful subject of the same land as myself—"

"Impossible, impossible!" replied the captal; "never! By the side of that noble prince under whose standard I have fought for years—whose very name is renowned, whose spirit is chivalry, whose heart is honour, and whose look is victory—by him will I stand to the last day of life and glory, in the companionship of Edward of England!"

"Right well, my lord, I know it must be so," answered the Count de Mauvinet: "so noble a spirit as yours could never quit, even for the smile of the brightest lady in all the land, the standard under which he has won fame; but, alas! in knowing that such will be your conduct, I must also feel that my daughter can never be the bride of any one but a friend to France, and an enemy to France's enemies. My Lord Captal," he continued, "think me not ungrateful; but put it to your own noble heart how you would act were you placed as I am; put it to your own heart, I say, and answer for me truly and straightforwardly. As knight, and nobleman, and man of honour, I charge you tell me, how would you behave?"

The captal stopped suddenly in their progress, bent his eyes sternly upon the ground; and for nearly two minutes seemed to put the painful question to his own conscience. Then, starting from his revery, he wrung the count's hand vehemently in his own; and, as if that gesture were sufficient answer to the question, he added not a word more, but darted back at once to the castle.

## CHAPTER VII.

When the Captal de Buch had left Albert Denyn in the corridor, he walked on straight to his own chamber, passing through the anteroom, where some of his pages and attendants were stationed, and closing the door carefully behind him. He then advanced towards a great chair which was placed near the window, but he reached it not, pausing in the midst of the room, and remaining there, with his eyes bent upon the ground in deep thought. He continued in this meditative mood for several minutes, perfectly motionless and still, though with a knitted brow and heavy air, showing evidently that the matter of his reflections was anything but pleasing or calm. At length, however, he lifted his head with an air somewhat melancholy, yet somewhat proud, saying aloud as he did so, "It is well! It is well as it is! Better far not her hand than not her love! Better far, better far! Farewell such fantasies; they shall soon be forgotten."

Yet he spoke with a sigh; and after he had done, he sat down, and seemed to think sadly and bitterly over all that had just passed.

That day had been appointed for a long expedition to meet the Prior of Montvoye, at a small chapel attached to the abbey, some seven or eight miles from the castle, and the captal had looked forward to the ride with no small pleasure in the anticipation. He had thought how he would keep by the side of Adela de Mauvinet, and what he would say—ay, and what she would reply; and with the fond fancy of love he had pictured to his own imagination her bright looks, and the sunny smile that sometimes came into her face when she was well pleased with anything that met her ear or eye. But now, alas! the captal's vision was broken, and the prospect of the journey presented to him nothing but pain. At one time he hesitated as to whether he would go; but then, again, he recollected that it might seem weak and unmanly in the eyes of the Lord of Mauvinet, and even of Adela herself, should he give way to such feelings; and then he thought that, at all events, he might

enjoy the satisfaction of being with her for the time. Thus he would gradually have reasoned himself into once more looking forward to the expedition with pleasure, had there not been from time to time a painful recollection of the glowing colour which he had seen upon Adela's cheek when his sudden coming interrupted her conversation with Albert Denyn. The remembrance, as I have said, gave him pain, and he loved not to let his mind rest upon it; but yet the importunate memory thereof would not be denied; and for more than an hour he remained calling back every look that he had seen pass between Adela and the young peasant. How long he might have remained thus I cannot tell, had he not been visited at the end of an hour and a half by the Count de Mauvinet himself.

"The horses are prepared, and in the courtyard, noble sir," he said, "and I have come to be your esquire; but I trust that you will not go this day to do me pleasure, if it accord not with your own inclination."

"I am most ready and willing, my lord," replied the capta, starting up; "but I had fallen into a fit of musing. I am with you in a moment, however;" and, making some slight change in his apparel, he hastened to descend with his friend to the courtyard of the castle, where horses and attendants were already prepared and arrayed to set out upon their expedition to the chapel. Among the foremost stood the beautiful white jennet which had been brought out for Adela de Mauvinet; but she herself had not yet come down to take her place in the cavalcade. The count sent a page to call her, and, after a moment's delay, she appeared; but it seemed to the capta, as he gazed at her for a moment, that there were traces of tears upon her cheek. They had been carefully wiped away, however, and during the ride no difference from her ordinary demeanour showed that she had been grieved or agitated during that morning.

When they had passed the drawbridge and the barbi-can, and were proceeding over the causeway, three abreast, the capta looked round for Albert Denyn, but the youth was not with them; and perhaps with some curiosity to see what effect his words would produce upon Adela, he turned towards the Count of Mauvinet, inquiring, "Where is the good youth Albert Denyn? he has not gone with us to-day."

"He asked my permission," replied the Lord of Mau-

vinet, "to remain behind, in order to see some cottagers, with whom he was placed in his infancy, after his father's death. They were very kind to him, and Albert is not one to forget kindness from any one."

The captal fixed his eyes upon Adela, and then fell into a fit of musing, but made no reply to the words of the Lord of Mauvinet. He taxed his own heart, however, with want of courtesy and benevolence in feeling pain at hearing the commendation of any good man.

"This is not right," he said to himself, "this is not right. If the youth deserves praise, praise let him have—ay, and win honour and renown too, if God so wills it!"

Let us not pause in this place upon the expedition which was now undertaken by the party from the chateau. The circumstances under which they went were distressing to all the principal personages concerned. The feelings of the count and the captal may be easily conceived; and could any one have seen into the bosom of the fair girl who rode between them, her state of mind would have appeared even more painful; for, from various minute facts which had come to her knowledge in the course of the preceding day, Adela had discovered that the deliverer of her father entertained towards her a passion which she could not return. His conduct had lately alarmed her; and though for some time she had striven to shut the facts from her own eyes, yet the truth had forced itself upon her at last, and she had become convinced not only that the captal loved her, but that he would demand her hand. What might be the decision of her parent she knew not, but she felt but too well that she could never entertain for the captal that affection which a wife should feel towards a husband. When she discovered such sensations in her own bosom, her first question was why her heart was so cold and indifferent to one well calculated to please and to win. He had all that could attract—beauty of person, grace, and courtesy of manner; high qualities of mind; dignity and command in his whole air; he was renowned in arms, kind, generous, gay, wise, faithful, just, and true of heart; and Adela again and again asked herself why it was she could not love him. It was early on that morning that these things were passing in her mind; and, busy with such ideas, she had lingered beyond the hour at which she usually visited her father's chamber to wish him health and happiness through the day. When she went,

she found that he was already gone forth with the Capital de Buch ; and a cold sensation came over her heart when she thought of what might be the subject of their conversation. As she was returning she met Albert Denyn, as we have shown, and the brief conversation which we have related took place between them. After it was over, Adela asked herself no more why she could not love the capital, but she sat down in her chamber and wept.

She had sufficient command over herself to prevent the feelings of her heart from affecting her demeanour in any great degree : but it may be well believed that her sensations were not a little sad ; and the day which had been intended to be a day of pleasure, proved, in most respects, one of pain to almost all the parties concerned.

When they had visited the chapel, paid their devotions at the shrine, and again taken leave of the prior, the Count de Mauvinet somewhat hurried his pace ; for several delays had occurred during the morning, and the sun was beginning to decline. Those were times, too, in which, as we have before shown, it was neither safe nor agreeable to travel late at night, although the proximity of the Castle of Mauvinet, and the general tranquillity of that part of the country, seemed to promise the party of the count full security on the way. He had with him, too, a stout band of attendants ; and the very presence of the Capital de Buch himself was a host.

The sun had just touched the edge of the sky when they again came within a mile of the castle ; but here they were detained for some time by an incident of deep interest to the Count de Mauvinet himself, and little less so in the eyes of the capital. They found the road at the top of the hill crowded with peasantry of the richer class, wealthy farmers, and landholders on the estates of Mauvinet, all dressed in their holyday costume, and bearing a certain expression of pleasure and satisfaction in their faces, that seemed to speak of some occasion of much joy. Two or three of the principal persons were collected in front of the rest ; and, as the count's party approached, one of them advanced a little before the others, and respectfully stopped their lord as he was coming forward.

"What would you, good Larchenay !" said the count, bending his head a little, and addressing him with a well-pleased air. "Is there anything in which I can serve you, my good friend ?"

"Yes, my lord, much," replied the farmer; "and, indeed, we have all met here to make you an humble request, which we trust you will not deny us."

"I am not accustomed, my good Larchenay, to refuse you anything in reason," replied the Lord of Mauvinet; "and so glad am I to find myself among you all once more, that I am little likely to be hard-hearted now."

"Thanks, then, my noble lord," replied the peasant: "our request, I see, is half granted already. We have heard that to-morrow you propose to pay your ransom to the noble Captal de Buch, and yet your faithful peasantry have not been called upon to bear a share therein. It was never yet known, my lord, that the poor tenants of so noble a gentleman as yourself were refused the right of contributing to redeem their good lord; and we have collected together and brought hither our little tribute of gratitude and attachment to one who has ever been a kind master to all; who has aided us in sickness, has spared us in adversity, and protected us in danger. We know not, my lord, the exact sum at which your ransom has been fixed, but we have gathered among us here some ten thousand crowns, which we come to offer with a very willing heart."

The affection of his peasantry brought tears into the eyes of the Lord of Mauvinet, and he thanked them in words which were evidently not words of course, although he would fain have declined the aid tendered to him. "The peasantry of France," he said, "have suffered too much already, my good friends, for me at least to press upon them more, whatever others may do. This was the reason why I asked no assistance from my people; not that I doubted in the least their love for their lord, or their willingness to help him in a time of need. My ransom is provided, my friends; half is ready here, and half must be prepared by this time in Beauvoisis; and, as I fixed it myself, when my noble friend here, the Captal de Buch, would scarcely accept of any, so would I also fain pay it myself, although you offer me such an aid." The farmer whom he had called Larchenay heard him in respectful silence, and drew a step back with a disappointed air: but an older and somewhat ruder-looking man stepped forward, and said in a bolder tone, "My lord the count, you have never taken from us more than was your due, very of-

of Mauvinet, and the bravery and determination of their own personal followers, the advantage was still on the side of the adversary, who, besides numbers, had the hill in his favour; and although, where the two leaders were, the line was kept firm and no ground lost, yet the centre even of their short phalanx was beginning to waver and give way, when some cried aloud, "They are coming from the castle! They are coming from the castle!"

The captal, even while he struck down one of the adventurers with his heavy sword, turned his eyes towards the chateau of Mauvinet, and saw a straggling band of men galloping over the causeway at full speed; but far before them was a horseman who seemed to gain ground upon those who followed every moment, and the captal thought he recognised, though the light was now becoming faint, the form of Albert Denyn.

"Courage! courage, my men!" cried the great leader; "aid is at hand! Hold firm there in the centre! By heaven, they are breaking in! Down with that green plume! Strike him on the head, Martin! Down with him! down with him! It is too late!"

And he said truly; for, notwithstanding a vigorous effort made by the men in the centre to recover their position, a strong body of the adventurers forced their way through, and the line was completely broken. At that moment, however, the first of the horsemen from the castle arrived, proving, as the captal had imagined, Albert Denyn. His body was undefended, but his head was covered with a plain steel cap, such as the commons usually wore in the field, and in his hand was a heavy battle-axe, which he had caught up in haste. His eye ran rapidly over the conflict as he came up; and although the Lord of Mauvinet cried, "Hither, Albert, hither!" he directed his course to the rear of the peasantry, forced his way through the midst of the frightened multitude, and cast himself between Adela and the man in the green plume, who had nearly reached the spot where she stood.

"He is right, he is right," cried the Captal de Buch, spurring on his horse, and leading forward the soldiers who were near him to attack the flank of the enemy.

All he could do, however, was to break their line as they had broken the small band of the Count de Mauvinet; and the whole became a scene of strife, confusion,

and disarray, in which each man was soon found fighting for his own life, and little heeding the proceedings of his comrades.

In the mean time, the retainers of the house of Mauvinet were every moment re-enforced by fresh arrivals from the chateau, and the adventurers speedily found that the day was going against them ; a discovery which soon led to an attempt to rally their forces and make their retreat in an orderly manner. But the party whom they had attacked had become aware of their own advantage, and, of course, were but little disposed to suffer them to retire in peace.

As they drew out and endeavoured to form, the Lord of Mauvinet, seeing many of his poor tenants either wounded or killed, and indignant at the very fact of an ambush being laid so near his own castle, eagerly arrayed his men to pursue the assailants, and only paused to give one glance round, in order to ascertain that his daughter was in safety.

At the moment that he thus turned to gaze, she had dismounted from her horse, and was bending, in no slight terror, by the animal's side. The space around was not yet absolutely cleared of enemies, but they were now only seeking to retreat ; and before her stood Albert Denyn, with his foot planted on the dead body of the man with the green plume, who had led the party of adventurers which first broke the ranks of the vassals of Mauvinet. The battle-axe which had slain him was bloody in the youth's hand, and his horse's bridle, cast over the other arm, seemed to show that he had sprung to the ground for the defence of his young mistress.

Feeling that Adela was now safe, the count hesitated no longer, but, uniting his men with those of the capital, he urged the pursuit of the enemy fiercely, slaying many and taking several more, though, in truth, few condescended to ask for quarter. In the mean time, Albert Denyn paused for a moment by the side of the Lady Adela, inquiring eagerly, though gently, whether she were injured.

" Oh, no, no, Albert," she replied ; " thanks to God, I am not ; but oh ! help my father, Albert, help my father. See, he is pursuing them fiercely. I fear only for him."

Albert looked around, saying, " It is growing dark, lady ; I cannot leave you without protection."

Adela, however, again besought him more earnestly

than before to fly to the assistance of her father; and some of the peasantry around exclaimed, "We will guard her to the castle, oh we will guard her;" but Albert did not feel well satisfied with the protection that they could give, till William Caillet, forcing his way through the rest, approached Albert, saying, "Leave her to me, Albert; I will defend the Lady Adela in case of need: you know that I can do so well."

Albert hesitated for a moment, though he knew not why; but at that instant the lady repeated, "Go, Albert, go! See! they are surrounding my father. Go! Oh, go all of you! I shall be very safe now."

Albert Denyn paused no longer, but, setting his foot in the stirrup, sprang upon his horse's back, and galloped at full speed after the Lord of Mauvinet and his party. His aid, however, was scarcely required, for the adventurers were in full retreat, and Adela's eyes had deceived her when she imagined that her father was surrounded by any but friends. The increasing darkness, too, soon put a stop to the pursuit, and the Captal de Buch, drawing in his horse, said, with a faint smile, "This is but a scurvy jest, my Lord of Mauvinet, and I fear your poor peasants have suffered."

"I fear so too," replied the count, in a sad tone, while he turned his horse to return to the castle. "Ha, Albert, where is Adela? Why did you leave her?"

"She would have me follow you, my lord," replied Albert Denyn; "and Caillet, who was there, promised to guard her back."

"Then she is safe! then she is safe!" said the count. "Come, my good Lord Captal, I must give you some better entertainment than this, or you will call me churlish;" and, thus saying, he led the cavalcade homeward.

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## CHAPTER VIII.

"You had better mount, lady, and get back to the castle with all speed," said Caillet, as soon as Albert Denyn had left them: "Peter the horseboy promised to bring me out a horse, but I fear the knave has failed me."

"No, no! there he stands," cried one of the peasants

who heard what was said, "there he stands, and the horse with him."

"Let me help you, lady," continued Caillet, offering to assist her to her saddle, and beckoning for the boy to bring up his horse; but Adela motioned him back, saying, "I need no aid, William Caillet," and at the same time she sprang upon her well-taught jennet, which remained perfectly still till she was in the seat. "I see not," she continued, speaking to Caillet, "that you need a horse to accompany me to the castle. You can walk at my side."

"But in case we should be obliged to make more haste, lady," replied Caillet. "The enemy are still scattered about, madam. See there! and there!" and, as he spoke, he too leaped into the saddle.

"Then we will go quick," said Adela, shaking her rein, and turning her jennet's head towards the castle.

Caillet rode on also, not, as might have been expected from his station, a step behind, but close to her horse's side, and Adela only the more eagerly urged the beast forward. Just as they were within two hundred yards of the moat, however, some five or six horsemen passed between them and the castle at full speed, and Caillet, laying his hand on Adela's bridle-rein, exclaimed, "This way! this way, lady!"

As he spoke he turned her jennet's head towards the wood that skirted the hill; and, as there seemed no other way of avoiding the party of adventurers, Adela, bewildered and confused, suffered him to do as he pleased, thinking that, as the men were evidently flying, the danger would soon be over.

In the mean while, the group of peasantry which had remained on the slope of the hill continued gathered together on the same spot, engaged in the various sad occupations that such an event as that which had just taken place naturally left for them to perform. There were dead among them to be mourned; there were wounded to be tended; the adventurers had found time, even in the midst of bloodshed and confusion, to strip several of the money which they had brought for their lord's ransom, and that also had to be lamented and commented upon. But upon the little knoll from which Adela and Caillet had departed for the castle, four or five men stood apart, talking eagerly together, and not paying any attention to matters which might well interest

them as well as their companions. Their eyes were fixed upon the course taken by Caillet and the lady, whom they continued to trace by Adela's white jennet, which could still be seen, notwithstanding the increasing darkness of the evening.

"Yes, yes," said one, "it is all right: you see he is going straight to the castle."

"Watch him still, watch him still," cried another: "I love him not at all. As the lady said, why should he take a horse to go back with her a five minutes' walk? See how he rides close to her side, too, as if he were the Captal de Buch. Some one has certainly betrayed us into the hands of these companions, otherwise they would never have come so near the castle, and I, as well as Larchenay, doubt him much. He was the only one that knew of our intention of bringing the money here, as far as I know; and when I was speaking with old Tourmont, the warder at the castle, just now, he told me that Caillet had been absent all this day and yesterday, and he said he wondered that our lord let him go on so."

"So do I," replied an old peasant who formed one of the group; "and I am determined, for my part, to tell my lord the count that I found him persuading my second son Charles that I did not treat him well: he has been a mischief-maker in more than one house, and it is time that the thing should be stopped! So I shall let my lord know the whole without ceremony. But look there, look there, Larchenay! He is leading my young lady towards the wood: he is bent upon some mischief, depend upon it."

"I will stop him," cried Larchenay: "if he goes up there, I can cut him off by the well path. Come with me, Peter John, come with me, quick, quick—Santa Maria! there is a scream."

Thus saying, he darted up the side of the hill, took a road through the wood, and ran at full speed for some two or three hundred yards along the narrow and intricate turnings and windings of the forest ways. He was then pausing for a moment to take breath, when another scream at no great distance reached his ear, and, rushing on as fast as possible, he suddenly came to a spot where two paths met. Along the one crossing that which he himself was pursuing, was coming up at the moment with furious speed the very person whom he sought,

William Caillet, leading on the jennet of Adela de Mauvinet. It was in vain that the poor girl attempted to pull in her horse; for Caillet had contrived to grasp the bridle in such a manner that she had no longer any power over the animal; and he continued galloping on without paying the slightest attention either to her remonstrances or to her cries for help.

The instant Larchenay beheld such a scene, he darted forward and attempted to stop the horse of Caillet. Nor was he altogether unsuccessful; for, catching the bridle, he checked the animal for a moment. But, without uttering a word, Caillet struck him a blow on the head with a heavy mace which hung at the saddle-bow, and laid the poor man senseless on the ground.

The villain then spurred on at full speed as before, making no reply to the entreaties and tears of the lady, and, indeed, not seeming to hear her, till at length, finding herself carried farther and farther from assistance, Adela exclaimed, "If you do not instantly stop, you will drive me to spring from the horse."

Caillet merely looked round, replying, "If you do you will kill yourself. You had better submit quietly to what cannot be avoided. I tell you," he continued, in a sharper tone, seeing her resolutely disengage herself from the saddle and trappings of the horse for the purpose of casting herself off, "I tell you, if you do, you will kill yourself."

But even while he spoke he relaxed in a degree the horses' speed, and Adela, seizing the opportunity, after hesitating in terror a single instant, summoned all her courage and sprang from her jennet to the ground.

She had been taught to practise such things, when a child, in sport, and she had often done it with ease and safety; but the case was very different now: she was cast violently forward, and fell; nor can there be a doubt that she would have sustained severe injury had not the path been covered with long forest grass.

Caillet reined up the horses violently, and, springing to the ground, bent over her with a look of alarm and grief. "You have killed yourself," he exclaimed: "rash girl, you have killed yourself rather than fly with one who loves you to madness."

"Leave me," said Adela, "leave me; if you are sorry for what you have done, leave me, and provide for your own safety. Some one will be here soon, and I

shall have help ; leave me, then, leave me, for I am resolved to go no farther ; so that, if you are wise, you will now think only of yourself."

"No, lady, no," exclaimed the villain ; "I have not done all this to be now disappointed. You are not so much hurt, I see, as your rashness might have brought about, and you shall go on with me, if we both die before to-morrow."

"Never," replied Adela, firmly, "never, while I have power to resist." Caillet answered merely by a laugh ; and, raising her like a feather from the ground in his powerful arms, he placed her once more upon her horse, in spite of her screams and tears, strapped her tightly to the saddle with one of the stirrup leathers of his own charger, and then, remounting, proceeded with the same furious pace as before.

Adela clasped her hands in despair ; she could no longer escape ; she saw that if she now attempted to cast herself down, certain death would be the consequence ; for, dragged along by the band which fastened her to the saddle, she must evidently perish in the most horrible manner ; and yet she asked herself whether it would not be better so to perish, than to remain in the power of one so hateful to her in every respect ; one from whom she could expect neither mercy nor consideration ; who had incurred, by the very act he had that night committed, the inevitable punishment of death if taken, and who had, consequently, nothing else to fear, let his acts be what they would. She asked herself whether it would not be better to die at once, horrible as the mode might be, than to continue in his hands and at his mercy. She felt that it would be so, but yet her heart failed her ; imagination painted all that she would have to suffer : the lingering agony of being dragged along upon the ground till life was extinguished ; the probable chance that, maimed and injured, she might still remain in his power, without absolute death bringing her relief ; and at the same time hope, persevering hope, yet whispered that some help might come ; that her father, or the captal, or Albert Denyn, might learn her fate in time to save her from Caillet's hands ; and thus for many minutes, with agony of mind inconceivable, she struggled between terror and strong resolution.

Her fall, too, had hurt her, though not severely : she

had suffered much fatigue as well as apprehension during the day ; and at length, as the last ray of twilight went out, and left her in utter darkness in the midst of the deep wood, and in the power of a man whom she detested, strength failed as well as courage ; her head grew giddy, and exclaiming, " Stop, stop, I shall faint, I shall die," she fell forward upon her horse's neck.

When Adela's recollection returned, she found herself still in the wood, but seated on the ground at the foot of an old decayed beech-tree, with none but William Caillet near her. A large fire, however, was blazing before her ; branches of the trees, thickly piled up with leaves, were under her head, and various minute circumstances showed, not only that some care had been taken to recall her to consciousness and to provide for her comfort, but apparently that a considerable period of time must have elapsed since the moment at which memory and sensation had left her.

As she opened her eyes, she gazed around with fresh terror and dismay ; but no consolation, no hope, was afforded by any of the objects on which the poor girl's glance fell. Caillet was standing before her, gazing upon her. At first he was apparently moved with pity ; but the moment that he saw she had fully recovered from the fit of fainting into which she had fallen, it seemed as if some demon, which had rested for a time under the command of a better power, roused itself again to triumph in her misery and distress ; and his usual sneering curl came upon his lip, as he said, " You are well now, lady, and no doubt you will soon get reconciled to your fate, though it may seem a hard one to you at present."

Adela for a moment covered her eyes with her hands, and strove to recall those powers of thought which for some time had been utterly extinct, and were still feeble and wavering. " My fate !" said she, wildly ; and, speaking more to herself than him, " What fate !"

" To be mine," replied Caillet, watching every look and gesture of his victim ; " ay, lady, to be mine. Yes !" he continued, seeing an involuntary shudder come over her as he spoke, " yes, to be mine ; mine, whom you have treated with contumely and contempt because I dared to love you, and, if not to avow, to let you see that love ; mine, whom you trod upon, at whom you looked indignation and scorn, while on the weak boy,

who neither dared to speak nor show his love, you smiled continually, encouraging him in a passion which you would have scoffed at as soon as it was displayed. Ay, you may tremble, lady! but I tell you you are mine! No help can reach you here; mine, and on my own terms."

He paused a moment, gazing full upon her by the fire-light as she sat with her hands covering her eyes, and the tears streaming rapidly down her cheeks; but at length he added, in a softer tone, "Listen to me. Moderate your pride; cast away the evil spirit of your class, and perhaps you may have some comfort."

"What? what? oh what?" exclaimed Adela, eagerly; "I have no pride! William Caillet, you have no right to say I have any pride."

"Well, then, listen to me," he repeated, assuming a kindly tone and an air of tenderness, which, to say the truth, sat not ill upon his fine features; "listen to me, Adela; for between you and me—and, ere a few short months be over, between lord and serf through the whole land—the terms of master and dependant must be at an end. Listen to me, and I will tell you how you may save yourself much pain, and save me from a harsh determination, which I seek not to display unless I am driven to it."

As he spoke he drew nearer to her, and seated himself beside her at the foot of the beech-tree; but Adela started up with a look of horror which she could not repress, and drew far back from him, gazing at him with terror and apprehension, such as the bird may be supposed to feel when it finds the fatal eyes of the serpent upon it.

A bitter frown came upon the face of Caillet as she did so, and he too rose, saying, "Am I so hateful to you, lady? Then I must use another tone: Down by my side, I say! You are the serf here, and I am lord. Do not think that I have risked death and torture, and cast behind me every ordinary hope of man, to be now mocked by a weak girl. Down by my side, I say! To-morrow the idle rites of the altar shall unite us forever; for I would fain see whether, in case of misfortune, the Lord of Mauvinet will slay his daughter's husband. Ay, to-morrow you shall be my wife; but, ere to-morrow comes, you shall humbly thank me for granting you that name."

Adela had gazed upon him while he spoke with a look of horror and apprehension which she could not repress, though she hardly understood the meaning of his words; but when, as the villain ended, he made a movement towards her as if to seize her by the arm, she uttered a loud scream, and darted away down the forest road; the profound darkness, which, at any other time, might have terrified her, now seeming a refuge from her brutal pursuer.

Ere she had taken ten steps, however, and while the light of the fire still shone upon her path, a living being—but whether man or beast she did not at first clearly see—came out rapidly, but quietly, from among the trees on her left hand, and stood in the way between her and Caillet.

The villain for a moment recoiled, so strange was the sight presented to him by the red glare of the fire. At first he too doubted whether it was a human creature that he saw; and had his been an ordinary mind, or had his education been that of a common peasant, he might have supposed that some of the numerous evil spirits with which the fancied superstitions of the times peopled the forests and the mountains now stood before him. He soon perceived, however, that, though nearly covered by the long and tangled beard, and the gray locks which hung in wild profusion over the brow, it was the face of a man which glared fiercely upon him. The form, indeed, was scarcely human; the height not more than four feet, the breadth great, and the arms exceedingly long and powerful; but the whole frame contorted, and more resembling the knotted trunk of some old hawthorn-tree than the body of a man. He was covered, too, with untanned goatskins for clothing, which added to the wild savageness of his appearance.

Caillet paused only sufficient time to see that it was one of his own species, and then sprang forward again to grasp the poor girl, who fled half fainting from his pursuit; but the strange being which had crossed his path stretched out its long arms from side to side of the road, exclaiming in a deep, loud voice, "Stop!" and as Caillet, fearful of losing the object for which he had played so rash and daring a game, rushed on, his knees were suddenly twined round by the sinewy limbs of this new opponent; and feeling as if he had been clasped

tight in bands of iron, he reeled and fell headlong as he endeavoured to disentangle himself.

His adversary relaxed his grasp as they fell together, and both started up at the same moment; but still the wild-looking creature which had interrupted Caillet in his course was between him and the way she had taken; and, brandishing a huge axe which had hung at his back, he barred the road, saying, "I have let thee stay for the last hour by my fire, and stable thy horse under my trées, and use my fountain of pure water; and now, brute beast, not knowing that there was any one that watched thee but the high unseen eye of God, thou wouldst offer violence to innocence even in my presence. Get thee gone, lest I slay thee! Betake thee to thy horse's back and flee, or I will dash thy brains out where thou standest."

Caillet made no reply, but, taking a single step back, laid his hand upon the hilt of the sword which he wore, and, drawing it from the scabbard, aimed a sudden and violent blow at the head of his adversary. It was instantly met by the staff of the axe, however, and the edge cut deep into the wood; but, ere it could be returned, sounds met the ears of both the combatants, which for a moment suspended the encounter.

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## CHAPTER IX.

ADELA DE MAUVINET paused not to ascertain who or what it was that interposed between her and her abhorred pursuer. She saw that he was delayed, and even a moment gained seemed to her a blessing so great as to give fresh strength to her weak and fainting steps. She flew on, then, down the road, till the darkness caused her to stop for an instant, and ask herself whether she might not plunge into the thick wood which stretched out on either hand, and, like the timid hare or the wild deer, conceal herself amid the underwood till the return of light enabled her to find some place of refuge, or brought her some help.

As she thus paused for a moment, she heard the blast of a distant horn, and her heart beat almost to bursting

with renewed hope. She thought at first only of rushing on; but it was far off: the person who blew the blast might take some other path: Caillet was sure to overtake her ere the other could come near; and she turned hastily towards the thicket. For another instant she listened again, holding the stem of one of the trees for support. The horn was not heard; but she caught what seemed fierce words from the other side; and, at all events, it was clear that her enemy's pursuit was stopped for the moment.

The horn sounded again in a moment or two, but it was still very distant; and Adela was drawing gently back from the road among the brushwood, when there came a flash along the path, as if some one bearing a torch were approaching from the side nearest to Mauvinet. Her first impulse was to spring forward and meet it; and when she heard horses' feet, too, coming rapidly, hope rose high; but then she thought of the attack upon her father's band, and her heart fell again. It might be the adventurers; it might be some base confederate of Caillet; and she drew farther back among the trees, but not so completely as to deprive herself of a view of the road.

Eagerly did she gaze towards it for the next few minutes, the light increasing quickly, and the horses' feet sounding near and more near. At length it came in sight, and Adela, uttering a cry of joy, darted forward, exclaiming, "Oh, Albert, Albert! you have come to save me!"

Albert Denyn sprang to the ground, and cast his left arm round her, while his right hand grasped the torch, and with eager eyes, and a look mingling fierce indignation with anxiety and alarm, he asked hurriedly, "Has he injured you, dear lady? Where is he? Where is he? No hand but mine must punish him. Tell me quick, Lady Adela; for your father and the cap'tal follow fast behind, and I would fain be the first."

"Oh, leave him to them, Albert!" exclaimed Adela. "He is strong; he is well armed: he fights for existence. Some one has stopped him, or he would have pursued me. Leave him, Albert, leave him, at least till some others come to aid you!"

"Hark!" cried the youth, not heeding her entreaties, "I hear voices there on before. Dear lady, you are safe. My lord the count will be with you in a moment."

Let me, let me, I beseech you, give him his due reward," and, without waiting to hear more, he pressed his lips respectfully upon Adela's hand, and burst away.

Darting forward like lightning, Albert soon heard the clang of steel, and caught a glimpse of the fire from beside which Adela had fled. It shone faintly through the trees, indeed, for the road had taken a slight turn; but it was sufficiently bright to show him two dark forms, engaged in what seemed a struggle for life and death, the light flashing occasionally upon the blade of the sword or the head of the axe, as they whirled round and round the heads of the combatants.

With his whole soul burning with anger and indignation, the youth rushed on, exclaiming, "Leave him to me, leave him to me. Villain! traitor! is this all your boasted zeal? Turn upon me, Caillet, turn upon me; leave him to me, old man, I will punish him."

"Ha! ha!" cried the strange being who had interrupted Caillet in his pursuit of Adela, "art thou come hither to deal with him? So be it, then; deal with him thou shalt."

Almost at the same moment Caillet exclaimed, with flashing eyes, "Now, then, meddling young fool, you shall have your reward, though doubtless you are not here alone. You have not courage to be aught but the lackey of some pitiful lord, or to wait upon a lady's serving-women. Serf by choice as well as fate, come on, I say! I may, perhaps, have time yet to give you a chance, like the fools you so proudly serve, of dying for a lady-love; if not, at least I can die myself, and I well deserve it, for having suffered either pity or remorse, or any other such idle dream, to make me miss my opportunity. Come on, though I well know you have cowardly odds enough against me!"

"I trust to have time to slay you before they can interfere," replied Albert, whose sword was already crossed with that of Caillet; "and all that I wish is, that I were but sure of half an hour with you alone here in the wood. Back, back, traitor, into the clearer light: this darkness suits your spirit better than mine."

Thus saying, he pressed forward upon his adversary with such fierceness and activity that Caillet was compelled to retreat towards the centre of the little opening in the wood, while the wild spectator of their combat, who had stood by for a moment listening and leaning

on his axe, now rushed forward to the fire of withered branches, and dry fern and gorse, and, tossing them high in the air, made a pyramid of flame blaze up, and cast a bright glare of red light over the whole scene around.

Nor, to say the truth, was Caillet displeased to be thus enabled to see more clearly in his strife with Albert Denyn. He was much too clear-sighted and shrewd not to have perceived the youth's natural genius for military exercises, and marked the great progress which he had made with very little instruction; and, indeed, though, from his greater age and experience, he had always affected a superiority over Albert, and pretended to regard him as a mere youth, yet, in reality, he had feared him rather than despised him, had been jealous of him rather than looked down upon him. He was thus well aware that it was with no common antagonist he had to do; and, though he vainly fancied himself as superior in skill as he was in age and strength, he knew that a false step or an ill-aimed blow might well turn the chances against himself.

Caillet retreated, then, more willingly than Albert thought, watching the eager thrusts and blows of his assailant, and ready at any moment to take advantage of a mistake. The youth rushed on fiercely, and perhaps somewhat rashly, and a lunge that passed close to his breast, and wounded him slightly in the shoulder, showed him that he must be more cautious in his dealings with his adversary. In the open light, however, he took more care; and a scornful smile of satisfaction, which came upon Caillet's face when he saw the blood flow rapidly from his companion's arm, was the next moment changed into a scowl of malignant hatred, as an unexpected blow from Albert's sword covered his whole face with blood, and made him stagger as he stood. Nevertheless, he parried a second blow, and only became the more wary from the injury he had received; his first fear being lest the flowing of the gore, which dimmed his sight, might prevent him from taking that revenge for which his soul thirsted. For a moment or two he kept entirely on the defensive, retreating slowly round the fire; and Albert became possessed with the idea that he was endeavouring to reach his horse, which stood hard by, cropping the grass at the side of Adela's jennet.

Determined that he should not escape, the youth

sprang, with one bound, into the midst of the burning branches, and then, by another, placed himself between his enemy and the horses; the intense heat, however, and the suffocating smoke of the fire, made his head giddy and his sight dim; and Caillet, who now attacked him with redoubled fury, might, perhaps, have ultimately gained the advantage, had not the galloping of cavalry sounded close at hand, and drawn the villain's attention to the other side. Albert took immediate advantage of the opportunity, sprang fiercely upon him, closed with him in a moment, and, shortening his sword, was about to drive it into his heart, when his arm was suddenly seized, and a loud voice exclaimed, "Come, come, my young tiger! On my soul, you have wellnigh killed your game; but I must stop you, however; for, if I mistake not, this is the youth who gave us tidings of such a goodly booty."

"And this is he," exclaimed Caillet, now freed from Albert's grasp, "and this is he who defeated your plan, and prevented you from reaping the harvest which I had promised you. Leave him to me, leave him to me, I beseech you: I have an account as well as you to settle with him."

"By Heaven," cried the person who had before spoken, and in whom Albert instantly recognised one of the band of adventurers that he had found contending with the Lord of Mauvinet and his little party, "by Heaven, if we had left him to you, my man, for another minute, he would soon have settled that account you talk of: at least so it seemed just now. But we have no time to wait for idle talk: you must both come with us; for it seems we owe you both something, and that score had better be cleared."

Too many persons stood round at the moment, and those persons too well armed, for Albert Denyn to offer any opposition. He had about him, it is true, all the eager spirit of youth; he had in his heart that daring courage which utter contempt of danger, inexperience, a hardy education, and a mind neither softened by luxury, nor attached to the world by high fortunes and bright hopes, can alone give; he had, in short, courage approaching to rashness. But yet there are some circumstances in which successful resistance is so evidently impossible, that even rashness itself dare not attempt it; and, in the present instance, Albert did not even dream

of opposing the force which now surrounded him. All his thoughts were, how best to act, in the situation in which he was placed, not for his own security, but for the safety of Adela. He knew, or, at least, he believed, that the party of the Lord of Mauvinet and the Captal de Buch could be at no great distance; and there was every probability of their coming to his relief if he could delay the adventurers for a few moments; but he hesitated even to make the attempt, lest by any means the safety of Adela might be compromised, and she might fall into the hands of the free companions before those who had quitted Mauvinet to deliver her could come up.

Ere he had time to arrange any plan, Caillet, as if he could have divined what was passing in his enemy's mind, and sought to frustrate his design, turned to the leader of the troop, exclaiming, "I will go with you willingly enough, noble sir; but I beseech you seek for the lady who was with me, and who must, even now, be at no great distance along that road. You know our contract was, that she was to be my share of the day's booty."

"It was your business to keep her when you had got her, then," replied the adventurer, harshly: "we have no time to seek this errant lady now."

"You had better not dally," cried Albert Denyn, eagerly: "the count and the Captal de Buch, with all their men, must be here ere many minutes are over. Some went by the one path, and some by the other, while I cut across through the brushwood by the chapel, till I reached the road again; but I cannot have gained ten minutes upon the rest. Hark! there is a horn: those are the captal's men coming up on the right."

"By the bones of the saints, then," exclaimed the captain of the adventurers, "we have but little time to spare. Quick! to your horses! Come, come, young man," he continued, speaking to Albert, "if you try to delay, we will drive you on with a lance! Mount your horse! quick!"

"That is not my horse," said Albert Denyn, "that is the lady's."

"Here is another in the lane," said a second man.

"Bring it, Hugo! bring it up!" cried the first; and in a moment Albert's horse, which had followed him slowly from the spot where he had left Adela, was led forward, and he was forced to mount, in order to proceed

with his captors. Placed between two of the free companions, his sword having been taken from him, and no means either of resistance or defence being left to him, Albert Denyn suffered himself to be hurried along at a quick pace, hearing from time to time the distant horns of the friendly troop from which he had been separated, but with the mortification of finding that the sounds grew fainter and more faint, as he was thus borne on against his will to a distance from all those for whom he felt any attachment. He had but one consolation: that Adela, at least, had escaped; that she was delivered from the hands of Caillet, and had not fallen into those of the adventurers.

This was certainly no slight comfort; but still, with the restless anxiety of all those who love well, imagination suggested a thousand dangers, and created a thousand fears in regard to the safety of the fair Lady of Mauvinet. He fancied that the count and the capital might not find her; that she might be forced to stray in terror and solitude through that dark wood during the livelong night, and perhaps perish ere the morning with hunger, cold, and apprehension. For his own fate he cared little; he feared not that any evil would befall him, although he knew that the free companions had sometimes shown great cruelty to prisoners who could not or would not pay a large ransom; but his was not a heart at all prone to apprehension; and he rode on, endeavouring to solace himself with youth's bright hope, that "all will go well," which lights us still, though the clouds lower above, and the tempest beats around us.

The march of the adventurers lasted the whole night, at first proceeding very rapidly, but gradually assuming a slower pace as they imagined pursuit to be left far behind them. During the earlier part of the journey, Albert paid but little attention to anything that was said or done by those around him; and, indeed, but little conversation took place among the men themselves. As their progress became slow, however, they began to speak over the events of the day, first in broken sentences and detached words, and then in more lengthened discussions, to which Albert—somewhat recovered from the first tumultuous feelings that his captivity had occasioned—turned an attentive ear, the subject being one in which, as may be well supposed, he took some interest.

It would be tedious, both to the reader and the wri-

ter, to detail the whole conversation of the two men who guarded Albert on either side, in which those who rode immediately before and behind also joined occasionally. The youth gathered, however, that although they had been disappointed in a part of their booty, they had yet contrived to strip the good farmers of Mauvinet of a very considerable sum; but the loss of men they had sustained also appeared to have been severe; and they spoke in terms of so much anger regarding the death of the leader who had first broken through the little band of the count and the capital, that Albert began to apprehend his own life might not be in safety if it were discovered that his was the hand which slew him.

"We shall never get his like," exclaimed one of the men, "if we seek him far and wide."

"I wish," cried another, "that I could have struck only one blow at the fellow when he hit him on the head with the axe; he should have kept him company on the road, wherever he is gone."

"It is a bad day's work," rejoined the first. "To lose such a captain as that may well make us curse the hand that did it."

"I got hold of him by the collar at one time," said a third speaker, "and in another moment would have cleft his scull; but, just then, fresh people came up from the castle, and I was obliged to let go my grasp: I would have given my right hand for five minutes more; but the time may come when we shall meet with the lad again. I wish Sir Robert would go and storm the castle some day."

"That would take more men than we have got to spare," replied the first who had spoken; "but I trust we shall lay hands upon the youth some time or another, as you say, and then we be to him if he come in my way."

"Or in mine," answered the other; "but, see, there is the daylight coming in. We cannot have much farther to march."

What he said was true. The soft morning light was beginning to appear in the east, and the objects around became more distinctly visible, everything looking calm, and sweet, and peaceful, and the whole scene seeming to reproach man for the folly and the wickedness of his unceasing strife and vain contentions.

The adventurers had quitted the wood for some time

when the day dawned, and the landscape presented merely a quiet country scene, with fields spread out in various states of cultivation; and some scattered cottages nested in various sheltered nooks of that undulating tract of country which lies upon the frontiers of Main and Touraine. On a distant eminence, however, was seen a tall tower, rising up and commanding the whole country round about, and towards it the band of free companions now took their way, passing through the midst of several of the fields, without the slightest consideration for some of the late crops, which were still upon the ground.

As the light grew brighter and brighter every moment, Albert could perceive one of the men who rode beside him turn round several times with a frowning brow to gaze upon his countenance, and at length, without saying anything, but merely making a sign for those who were behind to ride forward and fill up his place, the adventurer galloped on towards the head of the line, and spoke for several moments with the leader. He then came back again and resumed his place without making any comment; and a few moments after, the whole body wound slowly up a steep ascent towards the gates of the castle.

To whom it originally belonged Albert knew not, but it was now evidently in the hands of a large body of plunderers, of which the troop that carried him along with them formed a part. As they approached, a number of the soldiery were seen sitting round the barbican, which was beyond the moat, cleaning their arms or playing at various games of chance; and little discipline or regularity of any kind seemed to be maintained among them. Even the band which had captured Albert dispersed without order as they came up. Some, stopping to speak with their companions, remained behind; some, dismounting, led their horses through the gates; some stayed in a group to talk together over the adventures of the past night. The men who surrounded him, however, and those who accompanied Caillet in the rear, rode on into the outer court without losing sight of them for a moment; and the instant he had passed through the long dark archway, Albert heard an order given for the gates to be closed behind.

## CHAPTER X.

To retrace one's steps is almost always an unpleasant task. Whether the path that we have followed be one of joy or of sorrow; whether the bright beams of hope, or the dark clouds of despondency, have hung upon our way, it is still an unpleasant thing to tread back our course, and resume our advance again from a spot which we left long before. If sorrow have been our companion in the scenes which we are called upon to revisit, though there is an accidental sweetness that mingles with the bitterness of recollected woes, yet darkness must ever fill the principal part of the picture, and the light be faint and sad. Even if we have known bright joys and that glorious happiness which visits the mortal being but once or twice in life, still we find something unpleasant in retreading our steps: the scenes are less fair than memory painted them; the light that gave them lustre is gone out, and the contrast generally renders that which might otherwise have been pleasing, sad, and very often more gloomy than if there had never been anything glittering and joyful in the things around us.

We must nevertheless turn back, in the course of this history's chronology, to the moment at which we left the Count de Mauvinet, the Captal de Buch, and Albert Denyn returning towards the chateau, after having dispersed the body of adventurers, and pursued them as far as was judged necessary. The count and the captal rode on without anything like apprehension or alarm, although both were grave; for the latter was anything but sanguinary by nature, and loved not to see unnecessary bloodshed; and the count, on his part, had a personal interest of a painful kind in the events of the day. Many of his peasantry, upon whose superiority he prided himself, as much as upon the protection and happiness which they enjoyed upon his domains, had been slaughtered or wounded before his eyes, when they came to offer an honourable tribute of gratitude for the kindness which he had ever displayed towards them. Thus neither of the two noblemen could feel gay or

even cheerful ; although, in the first excitement of success, they might jest at the discomfiture of the adventurers. But still, neither of them experienced the least apprehension in regard to Adela, after the explanation which Albert Denyn had given.

Albert himself was not so well satisfied, why or wherefore he knew not. There were fears in his mind, vague, indefinite, perhaps unreasonable ; and he looked eagerly first towards the chateau and then towards the hill, though too little light remained in the sky for him to see distinctly any object at a distance. When they had reached a small mound, however, about a hundred yards from the causeway, which led across the moat, they were met by one of the peasants running at full speed, and exclaiming, " Oh, my lord, my lord ! the Lady Adela ! "

" What of her ? " exclaimed the count, apprehensions for his daughter immediately taking possession of his bosom ; " what of your lady ? Speak, man, speak ! "

" He has carried her off," cried the man, out of breath. " Instead of turning towards the castle, he has forced her away into the wood. "

" Who do you mean by he ? " demanded the capital : " what can we understand by *he* ? "

" I mean William Caillet," replied the man ; " I saw him do it myself, and Larchenay has followed him into the wood. Peter John has gone thither also ; but I fear they will not overtake him, for they have no horses. "

" Why did you leave her, Albert ? " exclaimed the Count de Mauvinet ; " why did you leave her ? "

" She commanded me to do so, my lord," answered Albert : " she thought you were in danger. Caillet, too—the traitor ! "

" Which way did they take ? " cried the count ; " which way did they take ? "

The man explained as well as he could ; but in the dim light he had not seen the proceedings of Caillet distinctly, and more of the peasantry coming up only embarrassed the statements of the first. The count and his companions paused but for a moment to hear ; and then exclaiming, " On into the wood ! My Lord Capital, I will not ask you if you will seek my child with me, I know you will," the Lord of Mauvinet spurred forward his horse towards the side of the wood, and entered by the first path he could find.

It so happened that his knowledge of the country, and a rapid calculation of the road which a person engaged in such a base enterprise was likely to take, led him at once directly upon the track of Caillet; and the count for some minutes pursued it fiercely, galloping at full speed, and without drawing a rein. The shadows of the night, however, were creeping over the scene apace; and at length the horse of the captal, which, though somewhat weary with a long day's journey, was still full of fire, shied at an object by the side of the road, and the moment after, the count himself pulled in his rein, exclaiming, "There is a dead man!"

"No, not yet dead," cried a faint voice, "though well-nigh dead, my lord; for that villain Caillet has fractured my skull, I am sure."

"What, Larchenay!" exclaimed the count, "is that you, my poor fellow! Was your lady with him?"

"Ay, that she was, my lord," answered the farmer, in a faint voice. "He was leading the horse along by the bridle, whether she would or not; and I am sure there was magic in the thing; for, though she screamed so loudly, and it was her own favourite jennet, the beast went on without heeding her cries, at the slightest touch of that traitor's hand."

"Which way did he take?" demanded the Lord of Mauvinet.

"Oh, straight on, straight on," replied the farmer; "he stayed for no one, but dealt me that one blow on the head, and galloped forward at full speed."

"Some one see to him," exclaimed the count, pointing to the poor farmer: "let him be carried to the castle, and have all care and attendance. Let us on now ourselves; we must soon come up with the villain; his horse can never match ours."

"Alas! my lord," said Larchenay, "he has dared to take out one of your own noblest chargers."

"Accursed villain," cried the count; "then we must but make the more speed. Set to your spurs, my Lord Captal; this is a sad day's work, indeed."

They galloped on for some way without check or pause, no one uttering a word, but all listening eagerly, although the noise of their own horses' feet must have drowned every lighter sound. At length, however, Albert Denyn spoke.

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"Hark! my lord, hark!" he said; "surely there is a horse's feet before us!"

The Lord of Mauvinet paused, exclaiming, "Halt!" and the whole line of those who were following instantly drew in their reins. At first no other sound was heard; but the next instant the captal exclaimed, "You are right, young man, you are right; there is some one flying along the road;" and in a moment after, the noise of a horse's feet, as they passed over some more stony part of the road, was distinctly heard, beating the ground with furious rapidity.

No more words were spoken; no thought animated the bosom of any one but who should first overtake the villain that had committed so terrible an outrage. But still the sounds went on before them, and led them for some way in the pursuit; till at length, through the dim light, they suddenly caught sight of the charger, which the moment after stood quite still; and, at the same instant, the rider put his hand to his head, and fell forward upon the neck of his horse. The next minute the Count de Mauvinet was by his side; but, instead of William Caillet, the figure was that of one of the heavy-armed adventurers whom they had so lately overthrown; and almost at the same time that the count laid his hand upon the bridle, so as to make the horse suddenly retreat a step, the man fell headlong to the ground, dead from the wounds he had received in the late combat. Some of the men sprang to the ground and opened his casque, but life was quite extinct.

"We have been mistaken," cried the Lord of Mauvinet, "and without torches our pursuit will be vain. Can you tell, Albert, where we can find either torches or flambeaux to guide us on our way onward?"

"There is St. Mary's Chapel not far off," said Albert, rapidly; "the priest there has doubtless both."

"Thither, thither!" cried the Lord of Mauvinet, "let us go thither;" and, turning his horse's bridle, he led the way to a small chapel in the wood, by the side of which stood the house of a poor priest, who, though in truth he had nothing within his dwelling to justify him in thinking that any one would plunder his abode, would yet scarcely, on any persuasion, open the gates to the Lord of Mauvinet and his party, though the count threatened to drive in the door if he hesitated any longer. When the good man was at length convinced that it was, in-

deed, his chief patron who was there waiting for torches, he would have fain made a thousand excuses for the delay ; and in the very attempt wasted so much time, that Albert Denyn, springing to the ground, entered without farther ceremony, and soon returned, bearing in his hand that which was wanted, much to the satisfaction of his lord.

Leaving the poor priest to close his house again at leisure, the party proceeded once more upon the search, the hearts of all sinking with apprehension at the many long delays which had intervened. To describe the feelings of Albert Denyn would be impossible ; and though, if any one could have seen his countenance, those feelings would have been found plainly written there, yet, as he had uttered not one word but those which we have mentioned during the whole ride, no one present had any idea of what was going on in his breast, unless, indeed, it was the Captal de Buch, who might entertain some suspicion that the heart of his young retainer was less at ease than some of those present suspected.

At length, on reaching a spot where several ways divided, the whole party were obliged to make a pause to settle their farther course, lest, while they were proceeding on one path, Caillet should escape by another. All the roads, it appeared, joined again at the distance of a few miles ; and while the captal took one, the Count de Mauvinet chose another, and despatched three or four of the men by a small path which led between the two. There was still, however, an extensive track where the wood had been cut down to afford firing for the ensuing winter ; and, lest the villain Caillet should evade their pursuit by crossing that, Albert besought his lord's permission to gallop forward by the only open path he knew of across the brushwood, and rejoin them somewhat farther on.

He took one of the torches with him ; and, as he turned to go, the Captal de Buch said, gazing on him with a peculiar sort of smile, " We will sound our horns, young man, in case you should need help, though I do not think you are one to call for it without great necessity."

" I trust not, my lord," replied Albert ; " and in this case I think I could well deal with that base villain alone."

" And, doubtless, would willingly do so," said the Captal.

"Most willingly, my lord," replied Albert; "pray God send me that good fortune!" and, thus saying, he rode away. His horse, which had not been out with the party in the morning, was, of course, fresher than any of the others; and, as we have shown—what between the shortness of the path and the pace at which he went—he gained a considerable way upon his companions. In the mean time, the count and the Captal de Buch rode on, pushing their chargers to their utmost speed, each party guided by persons who knew the way well, and each keeping nearly on a line with the other, though that of the captal was, perhaps, a little in advance.

The great English commander, however, had not reached the spot where the brief combat had taken place between Albert Denyn and Caillet more than a single minute, when the count himself galloped up, exclaiming, "What have we here? a fire! and, as I live, my poor Adela's jennet! Oh, my Lord Captal, this is very terrible."

The captal gazed sternly round him for a moment in silence, and then sprang to the ground, saying, "Here is something more! That good youth has overtaken him, my lord; here is the torch he carried, and the ground covered with blood. See, see—here among the grass—there has been a sharp strife! but what have we? Here are the footmarks of many horses. A whole band has been here not long ago; some thirty or forty, it would seem. Take my word for it, my lord, this is a deeper scheme than we have fancied: this villain is in league with the men who attacked us to-night, and it is they who have got your daughter, for the sake of a ransom. Albert, poor boy, has met with them, and has fared ill, it would seem. They have not killed him, however, or we should find his body; but he must be badly wounded if this be all his blood."

When he had done speaking, the captal turned to the count, and, standing by the side of that nobleman's horse, laid his hand upon the animal's neck, gazing up into his friend's face, which was full of the anguish that a parent alone can feel in such circumstances. The captal was moved by the depth of sorrow which he beheld. "Take comfort," he said, "my good lord, take comfort!"

"Oh, my Lord Captal," replied the count, "there can be no comfort for a father while he knows not his child's fate! But you cannot feel what I feel, nor can I expect

or ask you to follow out this enterprise as I must follow it! I can know no rest till I have delivered my child."

"Am I a knight, a noble, and your friend," demanded the captal, grasping his hand, "and shall I quit you in such an hour as this? Nay, nay, my lord, hear me but one word," and, unsheathing his sword, he held up the cross of the hilt before his eyes, saying, "So help me God and our Lady, in my utmost need, as I do never sheath this sword, or lay my head upon a pillow, or eat aught but bread, till I have delivered the Lady Adela, or taken vengeance of those that have done her wrong. Nor will I forget the man who has injured that poor boy Albert. I have not been so kind to him in my thoughts as I might have been; but I will do him justice, if God give me grace, hereafter. And now; my lord, let us on upon our way, as far as our tired horses will carry us. These men themselves cannot outrun us far, for their beasts were evidently hard pressed when last we saw them."

"We shall find a village some three miles on," said the Lord of Mauvinet, in a sad tone; "perhaps there we may obtain some intelligence."

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## CHAPTER XI.

ALBERT DENYN gazed round the small court of the castle, when the gate was shut behind him, with feelings not a little painful. His heart was one which might find joy and satisfaction in honourable danger and noble strife, which, even had death been imminent, nay, certain, would not have hesitated for an instant to plunge into a struggle which had any high and generous object. But the aspect of the battle-field, with its eager endeavour, its inspiring emulation, with the bray of trumpets and the clang of arms, is very, very different from the silent, gray walls of the prison, with the prospect of lengthened captivity and of unrecorded death. Such were the things which Albert Denyn had now to contemplate, as he gazed around him in the castle of the adventurers; for the menacing looks which he had seen, and the words which he had heard, were not to be mistaken.

The court was nearly empty of all human beings but those who brought him thither; and there seemed something solemn and sad even in the sunshine, as it rested on the tall wall of the principal keep of the castle, with none but a few small, irregular windows breaking the flat monotony of the surface. The large doors of the keep were half open, and from within, but seeming as if they echoed through many vacant halls, came the sounds of laughter and merriment, ringing harsh upon the ear of the young captive.

He and Caillet were now both told to dismount; and while they stood face to face, at some little distance, with no very pleasant sensations in their hearts towards each other, five or six of the adventurers stood round watching them; and two, who seemed to be principal personages in the band, passed through the doors into the keep, and disappeared for some time.

While they were gone, Caillet fixed his eyes upon Albert sternly and steadfastly, but met a look not less fixed and determined than his own. Neither spoke, however; and at length one of the adventurers who had left them reappeared at the door of the hall, making a sign to the others, who immediately bade their two prisoners to go on, and led them forward to the keep. Albert thought that he could perceive a gleam of triumph come over Caillet's countenance as he passed; but that look left it in a moment, and his features relapsed into their usual expression of cold scorn.

Mounting the steps, they were hurried through the great hall of the keep, which was quite empty, and across another vacant room beyond, to a small, dark chamber, which had once been painted with various gay devices, but which was already blackened over with the smoke of many years. In the large chimney blazed an immense fire of wood; and the white wreaths of smoke, still escaping, curled round the rafters above, and made the eyes wink with the pungent vapour. In the midst stood a table loaded with viands, and covered with large leathern bottles of wine, while round the upper end sat four strong, middle-aged men, with harsh and weather-beaten countenances, on most of which were to be traced manifold scars. The one at the head of the board, who seemed to be superior to the rest, had a frank and somewhat gay look, with large, square heavy features, and bushy, overhanging eyebrows. He and the rest

gazed upon Albert and Caillet for a moment without speaking, while two or three of the adventurers who had brought them thither seated themselves at the table with the others, and the rest, who appeared of an inferior grade, stood round the prisoners.

Albert, on his part—wisely resolved to keep silence as far as possible—remained standing before the adventurers with as calm an air as he could assume. Caillet, however, bent his brows—somewhat angrily, it seemed—upon the personage at the head of the table, and, after pausing for a short time, as if to see whether the other would begin, he spoke himself, saying, “This is not fair or right; I thought I was dealing with men of honour, who would keep their word with me when I kept my word with them.”

“You are saucy, my friend,” said the leader of the adventurers: “take a quieter tone here. We are men of honour, and do keep our word with all those who trust us and who show good faith towards us; but it seems that there are suspicions of your not having so done, and it is but fair that we should know whether such be the case or not. I have sad news here: not half the plunder that you promised has been obtained; our people have been attacked unexpectedly, and met with severe loss. You yourself, I am told, were seen among those who led the rescue from the castle, and it is much doubted whether you did or did not betray us into the hands of the enemy.”

“He who pretends to doubt is a knave,” replied Caillet, boldly, “and he who really doubts is a fool. Did I not stipulate for a certain prize, and was I not to take my own means and time for obtaining it? How could I gain possession of her but by the way I took? It was the meddling boy who stands there that led the rescue from the castle; I had nothing to do with it.”

“We will speak of him by-and-by,” said the leader; “in the mean time, keep to your own affair. How was it discovered so soon from the castle that they had made the attack?”

“Because,” replied Caillet, “they were half an hour later than they promised to be. If they had been to their time, nothing of the kind could have happened; but they were not, and they have no right now to lay the fault upon me of that which was their own doing.”

“How is this, Harvé?” said the leader; “how came you to be so late?”

"Why, I will tell you, Griffith," answered the man; "it was Chapelle, who would stay to drink some wine which we found at the miller's: I told him five times to come away, but he would not; and then he was so drunk, we were forced to draw him through the river to get him sober again, as he had to command the second troop, you know."

"In short, then, it was your own fault," replied the commander, "and you have no right to blame others for that which you did yourselves. There is no proof at all that he had anything to do with the rescue, and I see not why you interrupted him or brought him hither."

"It is not of that alone which I complain," said Caillet; "it is that they have prevented me from punishing yon insolent boy, who was the cause of all the mischief, and, by dragging me away, have suffered the very prize for which I had risked all to be snatched from my hands forever."

"As to punishing him," said one of the men, laughing, "he was more in the way to punish you, good youth. When we found you, you were in but a bad taking, and in a few minutes more would certainly have measured your length upon the ground, with more than one hole in your throat, if I judge right; why, he had cut you over the head, had got you by the neck, and had very nearly settled the affair to his own satisfaction, I suppose, before we came up. Was it not so?" he added, addressing Albert Denyn.

But Albert made no reply; and one of the leaders who were sitting at the table burst out into a laugh, exclaiming, "Better say no more on that subject, my hero; and as for the woman, give him a hundred crowns, Griffith, and send him about his business, then he will have no reason to complain. Surely a hundred crowns is above the worth of any woman that ever yet was born. Why, he looks discontented: what would he have? Give it him, and send him off; for we must have no saucy grumblers here."

But the other, whom he had called Griffith, and who, as the reader perhaps may know, was afterward one of the most distinguished among the adventurous leaders of the time, treated the claims of Caillet with somewhat more respect, saying, "I am sorry you have been disappointed, and will willingly do all I can to make up for it. What will you have? what do you wish for?"

Caillet gazed sternly down upon the ground for a moment or two, and then, raising his eyes, replied, with a heavy frown upon his countenance, "For the objects and purposes which, with you and through you, I have lost, I sacrificed everything on earth. I have no longer an abode, a friend, or aught else that can make existence tolerable; and therefore it is that I demand to be received into your band, to have a new existence given me by yourselves, as through you I have lost that which I myself possessed. You will neither find me wanting in strength nor skill, as I am ready to prove with any one, or upon any one here present; and of my determination and resolution you may judge by what you know of me already. This, then, I say, is the only compensation that can be made me for that of which the silly interference of the men who brought me hither has deprived me."

The men round the table looked in each other's faces with evident surprise, but that surprise was clearly not pleasurable; and, after a moment, Griffith answered, "No, no, my good friend, you make a great mistake: it is impossible that you can be received into this band for manifold strong reasons; first, if you must needs know them, we have none among us but gentlemen and soldiers of tried courage and of old repute; secondly, although you seem to think that your coming here and proposing to us a little enterprise, which, if fully successful, might have increased our treasure in no slight degree, is a service deserving high encouragement, yet I have to tell you that that very fact—though we may pay you with a part of the spoil, or suffer you to take the prize you coveted—far from gaining you admission into our band, would exclude you from among us forever. Know that we hate and despise traitors; that we abominate and condemn those who betray the trust reposed in them; that we have no place among us for such people; and though we may use them, as men use dirty tools to work great ends, yet we cast them from us as soon as possible, and wash our hands when we have done. The insolence of your demand is forgiven, and we will not treat you ill, though you have forgotten yourself. Nay, more, we will make you the compensation proposed. Take him away, Harvé, and give him a hundred crowns; restore to him his horse and his weapons; or, if his horse be tired, let him have another, as

good as his own, for he will have to make his escape from this part of the country. Furnish him with a safe-conduct, too, that none of our people may hurt him, and let him go in peace. This is all that can be done for you, young man, and more than most men would do; so say no more, if—as I judge by your look—what is hanging upon your lips is insolent; for the Welsh blood in my veins is not cool, and you may chance to set it on fire.”

“You mistake,” replied Caillet; “I am going to say nothing that can give you offence; you are the best judge whom you will admit into your band. Filled already with brave men, you need no more, but you would not have found me wanting. All I could desire farther were but one short half hour with that youth whom your comrade here so foolishly fancied had done me some serious hurt.”

“No, no,” cried Griffith; “be wise and take care of yourself! The sooner you are away from this place the better, both for you and us: we love not your presence. As to this youth, we have to deal with him ourselves, and will do so as we think fit, without your help or counsel.”

“You owe him,” added Caillet, unwilling to leave anything unsaid that could injure the man that he hated, “you owe to him whatever evil has befallen your band; for he it was who, watching from one of the windows of the tower, first saw the attack upon the count, and then called the whole place to arms.”

“Leave him to us, leave him to us,” said Griffith, impatiently; “we will act towards him as we judge right. Take him away, Harve, take the fellow away! We have heard too much of his babble already.”

Caillet was accordingly led out of the room; but, as he passed, he twice turned his eyes fiercely upon Albert Denyn, and ran his hand along his belt as if feeling for some weapon of offence to smite his adversary with, at any risk. As soon as he was gone, the leader of the adventurers turned to Albert, demanding, “Well, young man, what have you to say?”

“Nothing,” replied Albert, calmly.

“That is soon said,” answered the other; “but we may have something more to say to you. They tell me that it was you who slew, by the blow of an axe, one of our dearest companions and best leaders.”

He paused as if for a reply; and Albert answered, "It is very possible: one of them I certainly did slay, and he looked like a brave man and a valiant captain, so it is doubtless of him you speak."

"Cool enough," replied Griffith: "let me see now, young man, if you can give me as calm an answer to what I have next to ask. Can you tell me any reason why, as you slew him, we should not slay you?"

"The best of all reasons," replied Albert Denyn; "because I have done nothing for which I should be slain. I have done nothing but what any man here would have done in my place. I have served and defended my lord; I have defended his daughter. If I had died upon the field, I should have died doing what was right; and if I am killed now, those who put me to death will neither show knightly courtesy nor the dealing of true soldiers, but will commit a murder like base assassins upon an unarmed man. If there be any man among you who would not have done as I have done, I tell him that he is a traitor and a felon to his beard; and let him come forth and slay me, if I am to be slain, for the trade of a murderer will suit well with his character. But if there be one noble heart and good soldier among you, he will defend me."

"On my soul, that will I!" said one of those who had been sitting at meat when the party which conducted the youth had entered. "Griffith, you see well the lad did but do his duty. Out upon it! If we are to punish a man for fighting well in his captain's behalf, and fairly killing a bold adversary, I will put my head under a monk's cowl, and pater *benedicite* to every one I meet; for I trust—Heaven help me!—to kill as good a man as Chapelle every year, if I keep to this trade. Set the youth free! set him free! Did he do anything unfair, Maillot! Speak!"

"No," answered the adventurer who had ridden beside Albert, and who was one of those that had taken their places at the table; "but he killed my sworn brother Chapelle. I claim his blood, and his blood I will have."

"Poo! nonsense!" exclaimed Griffith: "the lad did his duty bravely; no one can say more: let him go! let him go!"

"Not till I have his head," said the man they called Maillot. "He is my prisoner: I took him, and I have a right to dispose of him as I will."

"But you did not take him in fair fight," said Griffith. "If I understood Harvè right, you came upon him while he was fighting with the other fellow, and seized him without resistance."

"It was Harvè seized him, and not Maillot," cried another man.

"I took him by one arm while Harvè caught him by the other," replied the man named Maillot, "and I say he shall die."

"I say he shall not, however," replied Griffith; "at all events, not till Sir Robert Knowles decides upon it. I determine *that* at once, Master Maillot! and if you dare to show your refractory spirit any more, I will cleave you down to the jaws for your pains. Hark ye, young man, I will take care that no harm shall happen to you. Sir Robert Knowles, our present leader, is a good soldier and a true knight; and he will not suffer a prisoner to be butchered in cold blood for any man's will. Tomorrow some of our party will move hence and go back into Maine, where Sir Robert is. You shall go with them, and, in the mean time, shall have free quarters in the castle here."

As he spoke, one of those who were sitting at the table with him leaned across, and spoke to the leader in a low voice, nothing being heard but the words "Maillot—find means—blood-thirsty—take care."

"By heaven!" exclaimed Griffith, when the other had done, "by heaven! he had better not, for he should not be alive many hours after himself. But, to make all sure, give the youth back his sword, some one. He looks as if he could defend himself right well."

While the sword was handed to Albert Denyn, who gladly thrust the scabbard back into his belt again, the man named Maillot gazed upon him with fierce and angry eyes, turning from time to time towards his companion Griffith, and gnawing his lip as if he would fain have given vent to his indignation, but did not dare to do so. Griffith took no notice of him, but still was evidently irritated, and somewhat excited by the man's demeanour; and, in order to have an excuse for not remarking it, spoke in a low tone to one of those who sat at the table with him. A short period of reflection, however, showed Maillot that he was placing himself in circumstances of danger, and made him determine somewhat to change his manner. It was with difficulty,

however, that he could sufficiently repress his feelings to say in a sullen voice, "You will do as you like, Master Griffith; but I do think it somewhat hard that my prisoner should be thus suffered purposely to escape, under the pretence of sending him to Knowles; for nothing else can be meant by the letting him go free in this way. Why, the first time the gates of the castle are open, he will pass through, of course, if he be not a fool, and then I not only lose my revenge, but any ransom, too, which I might get, if Knowles says he shall not be killed."

"Come, that is fair enough," said one of the men at the table; "we must not do injustice, Griffith, either."

"He can't escape, he won't escape," said Griffith; "no fear of that. Hark ye! young man, give us your parole—your word of honour, I mean—that, come what will, you will not try to escape."

"Rescue or no rescue?" demanded Albert Denyn.

"Ay," answered Griffith, "rescue or no rescue."

"And what if I refuse?" said Albert.

"Why," answered Griffith, laughing at the youth's boldness, "why, then, my young condition-maker, I shall take leave to thrust you into prison instead of letting you walk about the castle."

"Do so, then," replied Albert, "for I will have no hand in giving up my liberty voluntarily."

"On my life," answered Griffith, "you are a determined youth; but, nevertheless, I will not see wrong done you. If you value the free air so little, you must lose it; but for the rest, no man shall take your life while I can prevent it, except it be in fair and open fight. Still, as you like a prison, a prison you shall have. Let him be put into the tower on the left hand of the gate, since such is his fancy. There he will find strong doors enough, and I wish him joy of his solitude; for I think he will see nothing but a heron in the ditch, and perhaps not even that."

"I should think not," replied another; "for Pierrot with his crossbow would not let any bird rest there long. There, away with him, away with him; we have had enough of such gossip for once."

As they spoke, one of the men laid his hands upon the collar of Albert Denyn, and pulled him somewhat rudely away, Griffith exclaiming, at the same time, "Give him food, though, give him food! It is not good to be hungry in prison, as I can tell, my friends. I recollect once

catching a rat that visited me in my dungeon at Evreux, and saying grace most devoutly over my supper, though I was obliged to eat him raw notwithstanding."

A loud laugh burst from the whole of the adventurers at the idea of their companion's dainty regale, and Albert Denyn was led out of the room to be conducted to the place of his temporary abode.

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## CHAPTER XII.

THERE is nothing so difficult to bear, there is nothing which requires so much courage of the most serviceable kind to endure, as anxiety in solitude and inactivity. The very movement of the mind when we suffer great agitation lightens its weight; but when we have to sit and count the livelong hours alone, confined to one small space, and limited to mere reflection, thought becomes a burden, and imagination a torment, and every feeling of our heart seems to war against our peace.

Thus it was with Albert Denyn. So long as he was in the presence of the adventurers he had the ideas of personal danger to occupy him. He had felt the other evils of his situation comparatively little, and had looked upon the imprisonment to which he, in some degree, voluntarily subjected himself, as something requiring no great fortitude to bear; but when he was actually thrust into the chamber where he was to pass an indefinite space of time, and where he might have to undergo anything that his captors chose to inflict upon him, his heart gradually sunk, and a deep and overwhelming feeling of melancholy took possession of him.

The first half hour, indeed, was broken by two visits from one of the adventurers bringing him some food and a pitcher of good wine. The man seemed a good-natured personage, spoke to him in a kindly tone; and, though he accused him of folly in not promising to hold himself as a prisoner, rescue or no rescue, he still assured him that he would be taken good care of, and that no harm would happen to him.

After he was gone, however, the hours wore away slowly; and though Albert tasted the food which was

set before him, and tried to occupy a part of the time in any manner, yet he felt no appetite, and was obliged to betake himself to a prisoner's wonted occupation of pacing up and down the room. Weariness, however, at length overcame him; and, lying down upon the ground—for they had not yet furnished him either with bed or stool—he placed his arm under his head for a pillow, and fell into a sound sleep. It lasted some time; and loud laughter in some of the neighbouring parts of the building was the first thing that roused him. The sound of merriment, as may well be conceived, was harsh to his ear, for he had been dreaming of Adela de Mauvinet; a vague, confused, wild vision it was of dangers and terrors, which, even when he woke, left him disturbed and agitated. He found, however, that, though his sleep had been thus restless, it must have been very deep; for somebody had visited the chamber during his slumber, and had left a settle and a table, and put down also some straw in one corner of the room.

The sight of these few articles of furniture was a much greater comfort to the poor youth than might be supposed; for, before he had fallen asleep, he had remarked a window above him, which he could by no means reach so as to gaze from it out into the country beyond; but the tall stool which had been brought enabled him to see with ease, resting his arms in the deep opening of the wall.

When he first looked out, the mellow evening sun was just approaching the verge of the sky, and all the bright and beautiful colours of an autumn evening were tinging the clouds, and hanging on the woods and fields around. The country was not particularly beautiful; but there was something in that bright evening light which gave it a loveliness that it would not otherwise have possessed. Each green slope seemed rounded with gold, and a rich misty purple rested in all the woods and dells around. The fantastic vapours that hung upon the edge of the sky changed every moment in hue and in form, as if they had been full of life, and playing with the setting sun; and everything on which the eye of Albert rested recalled to his memory many a happy day, when, on such an autumn-tide as that, his own fancy had seemed to take part with the light clouds, and join in their sports with the departing rays.

After any deep passion, however, has taken posses-

sion of our hearts, it seizes—like some invading tyrant in a conquered country—upon every bright thing within us, whether it be sweet memories, or warm hopes, or grand energies, appropriating all to its purposes, and marking them as its own forever. It was thus with the heart of Albert Denyn. The sight of that fair sunset called back the memories of dear early days, but instantly with those memories came the image of Adela de Mauvinet, mingling the painful fears and apprehensions that the circumstances in which she was placed might naturally call forth, with every happier feeling to which the associations connected with the sight before his eyes would have otherwise given rise.

Where was she? he asked himself: what had become of her? Was she still wandering in the wood alone, or had her father and the captal come to her deliverance? It was all vague, and uncertain, and terrible; and however strongly hope might be inclined to raise her voice in a young bosom, fear for the time was predominant, and sadness altogether took possession of Albert's heart.

The sun had half gone down, and half of the broad golden disk was still seen above the distant forest, when Albert perceived two or three mounted men coming over the slope of a hill half way between the castle and the woods. Immediately after the horsemen came some persons on foot, and then others leading horses, among whom the youth thought he could distinguish the flutter of a woman's garments, and his heart sunk with a sensation of dread and apprehension which language can scarcely convey.

He asked himself if it could be Adela; if she had really fallen into the hands of some brutal band of plunderers; and his heart seemed prophetically to answer "Yes!"

Ere the party came near enough for him to distinguish anything clearly, the sun sunk altogether among the trees, and the group on which his eyes were fixed grew more and more dim, till at length it was lost to his sight. But still Albert remained convinced that Adela was a captive there; and, leaping down into the room, he walked backward and forward in a state almost approaching distraction.

It was some time before reflection came to his aid; but when he did take time to think, he remembered that

the lady perhaps might be more safe in the hands of the adventurers than any woman of a lower rank. Her ransom was sure to be large if she were treated with all honour, and the vengeance of her father and the whole of France was to be dreaded if any harm befell her; so that he could not but judge that the free companions would show her tenderness and respect as soon as they were aware of her name, which she would undoubtedly make known as soon as she fell into their power.

Albert tried to comfort himself with such thoughts; but still his heart beat with anxiety and alarm; and in a few minutes after, the sound of a trumpet, apparently coming from the courtyard, a number of voices speaking, and a loud tongue calling upon the name of several women, seemed to indicate the arrival of the party he had seen. The place, however, soon resumed its tranquillity, and a period of about a quarter of an hour passed without any other sound, till at length there was a considerable noise, and several voices speaking in the adjoining passage were heard, with the sound of coming footsteps, and now and then a sharp oath.

The steps paused at the door of the chamber in which Albert was confined, and the door was thrown violently open, admitting the blaze of a torch. At first the light dazzled him; but the moment after, he perceived in the hands of some of the adventurers without, that strange, uncouth-looking being whom he had found contending with Caillet in defence of Adela. Although it cannot be said that the young man felt pleasure at the sight of any human being deprived of liberty, and although the appearance of the old man but tended to confirm his apprehensions in regard to Adela's being captured, yet certainly it was a relief to behold some one who could give him a knowledge of the exact truth.

Fearful, however, that he might be deprived of even that satisfaction if his captors perceived that there was any feeling of interest between him and the person whom they seemed to destine for his fellow-prisoner, he remained perfectly silent, and kept as far back as possible in the chamber. The old man was thrust in with unnecessary vehemence; and it is probable that those who brought him thither had already treated him somewhat roughly, for one of the leaders who came up at the moment exclaimed,

**"Calmly, calmly! Remember his age."**

As soon as the new captive was in the chamber, the door was shut, and the two prisoners were left in utter darkness. For some minutes neither of them spoke, though the elder was heard muttering to himself, but the words were indistinct to any other ears than his own. Albert kept silence for a moment or two, lest any one who might be near should overhear what he was about to say; and he still heard various voices speaking without, when suddenly, to his surprise, his strange companion burst into a loud and vehement laugh.

"You seem to bear your imprisonment lightly," said Albert, at length: "would that I could laugh as you do."

"Why do you not, then?" demanded the old man; "but you need not tell me; I know why as well as you do. It is that you have known so few and such slight sorrows, that a day's imprisonment, even in such a chamber as this, with every comfort and aid to boot, is to you as heavy a grief as the loss of all that makes life valuable would be to me. Misfortune is a hard master, and requires a long apprenticeship, young man."

"Doubtless," answered Albert, "doubtless it is so; but yet I cannot but think a long imprisonment, the uncertainty of our future fate, and a separation, perhaps forever, from those we love best, might well make us sad, even if we had more philosophy than I pretend to."

"I will tell thee what, youth," answered the old man: "the time may come when the loss of friends, the breaking of all hopes, the disappointment of every expectation, the murder of your children or your relations, the agonies, the tears, and the ruin of those you love best on earth, will so teach you to expect misfortune, that a brief imprisonment, such as you have met with now, will seem to you as a relief from worse, rather than a disappointment of your hopes. This, I tell you, may happen to you. It has happened to many of your relations before, and why not to you also?"

"How do you know," answered Albert, "that it has befallen any of my relations?"

"Because they were men," replied his strange companion; "therefore all must have suffered, and some must have suffered thus. Thus, too, very likely you will suffer, when your appointed time is come."

"Perhaps it may be so," said the youth: "I have a good foretaste of such suffering even now."

"Call you what you now endure a foretaste of such

sufferings!" cried the old man; "call you this, then, a foretaste; this, which is but a mere nothing! It is mere foolishness. The time will be when you shall look back to this period, and wish it could come over again."

"No," answered Albert, firmly, "no: what I felt yesterday can hardly ever be surpassed by what I may feel hereafter. No, it cannot be! What may be my future fate I do not know; but of one thing I am certain, that there were moments in the course of last night which no after sorrow can ever surpass; nay, nor can it exceed that which I feel now, ignorant as I am of what has befallen the daughter of my noble and generous lord."

His fellow-prisoner remained silent for several moments, and then replied, "You wish to know what has become of her. She is here—in this very castle—but a few yards distant."

"As I thought," cried Albert, "as I thought! This is indeed terrible; but they dare not, surely they dare not treat her ill."

"No," answered the old man; "oh no! Fear not for that; they will not treat her ill! Fools as they are, they are too wise for that."

"I trust they are," said Albert, "I trust they are; and yet what reliance can be placed in such men? Their passions are their guides as often as their interests."

"That is true," replied his companion, "that is very true; you are wiser than I thought you, youth; and yet you have a right to be wise too. But put your mind at ease. The wife of the man named Griffith is here in the castle even now, and she is a woman of high birth herself."

"Of high birth!" exclaimed Albert, "and the wife of an adventurer like this?"

"Even so," answered the old man. "Know you not that half of those who live by plundering their fellow-creatures call themselves of high race, and that many of them have well won the only title to nobility which this age knows by shedding more blood than any of the other monsters of the time? But to what I was saying: the wife of this Griffith is here. The lady has been taken to her chamber, and there she will be well. I have heard them talking about her ransom already. Set your mind at ease, set your mind at ease! When I look back upon the past," he continued, after a momentary pause, "when I look back upon the past, I often think

that the light sorrows of youth are as heavy to those that bear them as the weightier woes of age. There was an old Greek, a slave, who dealt in fabliaux—I know not whether you have ever heard of him."

"Oh yes," replied Albert. "His name was Esopus."

"The same, the same," replied the old man, whose learning did certainly surprise Albert Denyn. "That old Greek told a story of a hare running a race with a tortoise, which was intended to represent the heedless lightness of youth contending against the cautious experience of age; but while he showed that the slow perseverance of the one ultimately outdid the excessive activity of the other, he should have shown, also, that the hare might have been crushed to death under a weight which the tortoise would hardly have felt. Thus it is with age and youth: the apathy of age is a hard shell, which enables it to bear cares a thousand times more heavy than those which would crush youth at once under their burden. We have so many times in life the opportunity of practising the art of endurance, that it would be hard if we did not learn the lesson ere we have done."

"Thank God to hear of the lady's safety, however," said Albert; "that is one great satisfaction; and with it I will comfort myself, although your picture of life is not altogether consolatory."

"It is such as life is," replied the old man, "and such as you will find it, youth. The man that sees fifty years, and yet finds anything to enjoy in life, is either a beast or a fool; for by that time all the better parts of our nature have discovered that their home is in another place."

"And yet," said Albert Denyn, "you laughed right heartily but now."

"That did I," rejoined his companion: "I laughed—I did not smile; and laughter is only a sign of sadness or of folly, not of happiness. Happiness never does more than smile. It is that insane thing merriment, or mockery, or scorn, or despair, that laughs. I laughed in mockery of those who shut me in here."

"And why in mockery?" demanded Albert. "Good faith, I have not the heart to mock them: they have too much power over me for me to scorn them."

"They have no power over me," replied the old man. "I will tell you hereafter why I laughed, and why I scorn them: let it be sufficient for you now to know that the lady is safe."

"That is indeed much," replied Albert; "and I could almost content myself with being assured that such is the case, if I had any means of informing my good lord, her father, that she runs no risk. But that is hopeless."

"Ha!" said the old man, "ha! we may find such means, nevertheless; yet why would you send him such tidings?"

"Why?" exclaimed Albert; "has he not been a friend—a father to me? And were it not so, is he not a human being—a parent, a fond, affectionate, tender parent, whose heart must be now bleeding with apprehension, and grief, and terrible anxiety?"

"Then he really loves his daughter?" said the old man, in a cold tone.

"Loves her!" exclaimed Albert; "how can he help loving her! Loves her! better than his own life—better than aught else on earth except his honour!"

"By so much the more," replied the old man, in a stern tone, "will he condemn the presumptuous thoughts that are in your bosom, youth."

Albert Denyn was silent for a moment—not with shame, but he was surprised and pained to find that his feelings towards Adela showed themselves so plainly; that the scanty means of observation which the old man as yet possessed were nevertheless sufficient to discover a secret which he had thought well concealed from all eyes but those which watched him with such keenness and suspicion as had been displayed by Caillet.

He answered quite calmly, however, when he did speak; for, although his own eyes had now been long opened to all that was passing in his heart, though he felt and knew that he loved with all the ardour, as well as the devotion, of the deepest passion, yet his love was utterly without the presumption of a single hope. He felt so humble in his affection, that he was not moved by many of the agitating emotions which affect other men under the influence of the same passion; and although it certainly was his purpose to hide his love for his lord's daughter out of respect and reverence, yet he was so conscious of rectitude of purpose, as well as humility of feeling, that though he did not wish, yet he did not much fear discovery.

"You are mistaken," he replied, at length, in a tone so tranquil and cool as to surprise his hearer, "you are mistaken. I have no presumptuous thoughts in my bo-

som, old man ; my thoughts are as humble as my station."

"Do you pretend to say," demanded his strange companion, "do you pretend to say that you do not love this lady?"

"God forbid!" answered Albert. "I love her with my whole heart and soul. I would willingly sacrifice my life for her; and yet, old man, all this can be without one presumptuous thought. Can you not understand this?"

The old man paused for a moment, and then replied, "I can understand it well, but I knew not that you could either understand or feel it."

"Why, what can you know," asked Albert, "either of me or of my nature, by seeing me in circumstances of excitement for some short five minutes? I should almost think that, in this dark place, you mistook me for some one else, were it not for what you say of the Lady Adela."

"No!" replied the old man, "no; I make no mistake; your voice is enough for me. I never forget sounds that I once hear, and I should know your voice amid the shout of an army. But you are wrong in another point: this is not the first time that I have seen, these are not the only means I have had of knowing you. From your birth till now I have been near you. But all that matters not. What have I to do in life but to watch those that are around me; to mark their qualities, and to hate or love them as those qualities may require?"

"Methinks," replied Albert, "it might be as well to leave them without either hate or love."

"Not so, not so," answered the old man: "to hate and to love is a necessity of our nature; nay, more, it is an ordinance of God. Not to abhor vice, not to feel affection for virtue, is to share with the evil. Vice is, in fact, only a bolder sort of indifference to virtue. I would rather almost see a man wicked than the friend of wicked men."

There was something strange and rambling in the old man's discourse, which certainly had so much of singularity in it as to lead Albert to imagine that his reason was somewhat unsettled. The singularity of his appearance, which has been already described, might not alone have produced such a conviction; for in that age,

what we should now call eccentricity, in that particular shape, was not only common, but was absolutely sanctioned by the superstitions of the day. Many a man still thought he was doing God good service, and ensuring the salvation of his own soul, by wearing garments of skins, feeding upon roots, and separating himself from his fellow-men, so that to encounter a person habited like Albert's present companion, and to find him a devout, discreet, and sensible person, though somewhat tinged with fanaticism, was by no means an uncommon case. The peculiarity of the opinions, however, which the old man entertained, without any inquiry as to whether they were right or wrong, might well lead the youth to imagine that his intellect was somewhat shaken; for in those days it was rare, indeed, to find any one who went out of the beaten track.

Judging thus of his companion's state of mind, Albert cared not to enter into any abstruse discussions, but turned the conversation back to what the old man had been saying in regard to himself. "Was it from knowing that I was the companion of wicked men, then," he asked, "that you supposed me filled with presumptuous thoughts, which certainly I never entertained? I know not that I ever showed myself the friend of wicked men: when have I done so, my good friend?"

"Have you not been always the companion and the friend of this very Caillet, to whom you show so mortal a hatred now that a rivalry has sprung up between you? Who was so often seen with him as you? who seemed to share his thoughts and his counsels but yourself?"

"Nay, nay, you are much mistaken," replied Albert, eagerly: "circumstances cast us together, but not affection: there was a link between us which bound us to companionship, with our hearts unbound. We were both serfs in a house where all were noble round us, except the other servants of the mansion, who were all differently treated from ourselves. They were, indeed, a separate order of beings in mind as well as in treatment; but in scarcely any respect was there a distinction made between us and those noble pages whom from time to time the highest personages in the land sent to receive instruction in the house of our generous and knightly master. If there was a difference, it was only that more knowledge was given to us than to them; that to us were opened the stores of ancient learning; that

for us all the knowledge of the schools was poured forth; and that, as our lord wished to place us in the Church, we were taught many an art and many a science that the high nobles of the land did not receive. Thus were we companions from early years, though he was older than I, and thus were we cast upon each other for society, by similarity of situation, though not of tastes. He, however, was discontented with all things: I was with all things well contented. I might regret, it is true, that I was not one of the nobles that I saw from day to day. I might wish that fortune had placed me among them, but I hated them not because such was not my lot. I was happy, I was grateful for the superior instruction accorded to me, and for the kindly treatment I received; but Caillet vowed, for his part, that he would rather have remained in ignorance, and in the lowest state of bondage, than acquire knowledge, which only showed him the evils of his station. He detested the nobles of the land, and avowed that detestation when conversing with those whom he believed would not report the fact; and such was I. Not that he ever loved me—for he loved me not—but that I was the only one in the same state and situation as himself; the only one, in short, to whom he could speak his feelings freely. He knew that I would not betray him, and therefore he dared to say to me what he thought, although his feelings and mine were always different, and he was sure to encounter opposition and dispute. Thus were we, as I have said, companions without being friends, till, by his last act, he has ended the companionship also; and if ever we spend another half hour together, it will be the last that one or the other will see in this world."

"Did the Lord of Mauvinet teach you the use of arms?" demanded the old man, in a slow and thoughtful tone: "you seem skilful with the sword."

"I was early taught," replied Albert, "to wield all such weapons as peasants are permitted to employ, and the sword was placed in my hands when I was very young. Afterward, my noble lord, though I cannot say that he caused me to be taught to bear the weapons of a man-at-arms, yet, when he saw how much delight I took therein, suffered me to learn the use of the lance, the management of the horse, and, indeed, all the exercises of chivalry. Caillet also had the same advantage, but I think he was not more skilful than myself. He

was older and more confident, perhaps, but yet I should not fear to meet him in a good cause, even though he had some superiority."

"And you would slay him, boy," replied his companion; "for his heart is bad, and yours is good; and the man who wants the armour of a just spirit has but a feeble defence in all external arms."

"I know not," answered Albert Denyn; "though I can well conceive that many a man, feeling his conscience ill at ease, may become weak and timid in the hour of danger. Such, however, I am sure, is not the case with Caillet. He thinks all that he does is right; not that he does it because he thinks it right, but that he thinks it right because he does it. I have heard him defend eagerly the same feelings and conduct in himself which I have heard him blame most bitterly in men of noble blood; and I never yet, in all my life, heard him acknowledge, or saw him feel, that he was wrong. Such a thing is not in his nature. Call him not, in Heaven's name, call him not my friend," he continued, reverting to what had passed before: "I should hate myself if I could ever have been a friend to one so base and utterly unworthy. But now that you have probed my spirit to the bottom, let me hear that which I own is of greater moment to me than all things. Tell me more of the lady; tell me all that you know concerning her. How came they not to find her? her father and the capital, I mean. How came she taken by these men? and what, think you, will be the result of the situation in which we all are placed?"

"Manifold questions," answered the old man, "none of which I will answer now. Wait till after midnight be passed," he continued, in a lower tone, "and I will then reply to you fully. I have that to tell you which may surprise you not a little. Now lay down your head upon the table, for you have need of repose."

"I have slept already," replied Albert.

But the old man instantly rejoined, "Sleep again, then, sleep again! What right has youth to think? Sleep again, I say, for not a word more shall you hear from my lips till after midnight; and it yet wants full four hours to the time when the sun turns back again to this side of the earth."

Albert Denyn saw by the faint light, which found its way into the room from the moonlight sky without, that

the old man crossed his arms upon his chest, and buried the greater part of his face in the skins of which his dress was formed; and perceiving that it would be useless to seek farther conversation for the time, he too bent down his eyes upon his folded hands, and remained silent, though he slept not.

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### CHAPTER XIII.

To an active mind there is something solemn, and even elevating, in the task of watching in the night. The silence, the darkness have their effect; the sallies of the ear and the eye are closed. The spirit, shut up within its citadel, holds no intercourse with the world without. The thoughts, the feelings, the fancies, the passions, which form the turbulent garrison of the human heart, cut off from communion with all the busy things of external life, may be reviewed by reason, and brought under the rod of judgment. Well used, an hour's watching in the midst of the night is often more valuable to the mind of man than whole years of the busy life of day. The world and all its important littlenesses seem for the time to be dead; the immortal being within us feels alone in the presence of its God; the heart speaks to the heart of all the higher purposes of life, and the clay that encumbers us appears to be, in a degree, cast aside, together with our intercourse with other earthly creatures. If ever spirit triumphs over matter in this world, it is in the hours of solemn and silent watching in the midst of the night.

Albert Denyn remained without speaking for a long time; and although his watch was not so still and calm as it might have been at a later hour, still it gave opportunity for thought, which was not lost upon him. From time to time there came sounds of voices speaking, of merriment, of laughter, and of song; but gradually these bursts became shorter and more short, the intervals longer, and the silence between more profound, till at length all became still, while the gloom was increased by the moon getting behind the hills, and leaving nothing within the sight of the watchers in the prison but

a bright star shining through the high window—like some of the mysterious truths of revelation, bright and wonderful amid darkness, but casting no light upon any other object.

In the mean while Albert communed with his own heart. At first his feelings and thoughts were turbulent and wild, refusing all control, so that, though he felt they wanted regularity, he almost despaired of their ever returning to order again. Gradually, however, of themselves, they became more calm; and ere long he could reason collectedly, and thought and reflection brought on high resolves. He found that a passion had grown upon his heart which should never have taken root therein; and he accused himself of folly and of weakness, even although his own heart acquitted him of presumption. To cast that passion from him he never hoped to do: he never wished it; he felt it was impossible; but he believed that in a firm and noble spirit—and he knew his own to be so—that passion itself might be so purified and elevated as to lead him on to great and worthy deeds, to be a new principle of action in his breast, to inspire high purposes and efforts, and give a mightier energy to the chivalrous spirit that existed within him.

He fancied that the very thought of what would be Adela's feelings, if she heard, by chance, of some great enterprise achieved by him, would carry him on to exertions that nothing could resist; and thus judgment and reason employed the power of fancy to lead and guide the passions of his heart to grand purposes rather than in the paths of vice and wrong. So may we always do in life if our will be towards virtue rather than crime.

Thus had passed the time for many hours; silence had come completely over the world; and Albert had more than once turned his eyes impatiently towards a spot on the other side of the chamber, at which he could faintly perceive a dim, obscure mass marking the place where the old man sat, but had seen not the slightest movement, nor heard the lightest sound. At length, however, the clear voice of a cock, crowing at some distance, came upon the air, and his strange companion suddenly broke silence. "Now, now," he said, "I will tell you what you wish to hear, and more than you expect; for the time is coming when you may act as well as speak."

"Tell me first of the Lady Adela," exclaimed Albert; "it is of her I would fain have tidings, old man."

"Call me not old man," replied the other; "that is not my name, youth, though I be old, and though I be a man."

"I would willingly give you your own name, if I knew it," answered Albert Denyn.

"Call me Walleran Urgel," said his companion; "that is the name which the people give me; and as to the lady, be satisfied she is well, and safe. The object of these plunderers is to win gold. They are like children piling up heaps of dirt, for the purpose of casting it to the winds the next moment—still their object is gold; and, when they have so fair a chance of gaining a great sum by this poor girl's ransom, they will not risk the loss of it by doing her any injury. No, no! they have given her a chamber near that of their leader's wife, and there she will be tended with all courtesy. To-morrow they will bid her write to her father, showing what gentle usage she has received, and naming the ransom they have fixed. But they will hold out the fear of less gentle deeds if he should attempt to recover her by force of arms. So much for that: your second question was, how she was taken by these men—"

"And how it happened that her father and the capital found her not," added Albert, "for they were close behind."

"Of that I know nothing," replied the old man; "but how they took her I can tell right well. I left you contending with the villain Caillet, and sought the lady to give her help. She had seen me defend her with my axe, and so she trusted me; but when the men came up, who took you prisoner, we had wellnigh fallen into their hands at once, for she thought it was her father's party, and would have darted forward to meet them had I not shown her who they really were. I then led her to a place of security, made her a bed of leaves, sheltered her from the winds of night, and lighted her a fire to dispel the damp air of the forest; for she has ever been good to the poor and the lowly, and deserves the careful watching of all who love the noble and the kind. I promised to guide her safely back to her home the next day; but, ere I could do so, at an early hour this morning, these knavish companions, hearing that I was still in the neighbouring wood, came out to hunt me down like a wild beast."

"Why, what harm had you done them?" demanded Albert.

"None," replied the old man; "but do we need to harm others to make them harm us? No, no, not so in this world! For the last twelve years have I dwelt either in this old castle or in that dim wood. Neither in the wood nor the castle had I any right but sufferance; but the building itself was only tenanted by some servants of a lord who spent his days in rioting afar. They charitably gave me a dwelling in the winter time, and all the bright summer I spent in the green forest. With the chambers, the passages, the towers, and even the dungeons of this place, and with the most secret paths of the wood, no one in all the land is so well acquainted as I am; and when, some ten days ago, these filthy robbers came and took possession of the place, I fled, and sought refuge where you saw me last night. There is a tower herein to which they could find no entrance, and it is called the Stairless Tower. They thought, it seems, that it must contain treasure; and the people they found here told them that none knew its secrets but myself, for they had seen me more than once upon the top, when they, poor fools, could not find the way up. This led to more inquiries; and as wicked men never feel safe in their wickedness, the plunderers fancied that my knowledge of the place would be dangerous to them, if, as they intend to do, they kept possession of it, as a sort of advanced post on the side of Touraine. They sent out one party to seek me many days, hoping to lure me back with promises and offers; but they found me not, and at length, this morning, they despatched another to hunt me down like a wild beast."

"But the Lady Adela," cried Albert Denyn: "what became of her?"

"I had watched the lady through the night," replied the old man; "but she slept not till just before the morning's dawn, when her eyes grew heavy, and a short slumber came upon her. Not long after I heard some sounds; and, though the fire had now sunk low, there came a smoke and the crackling of wood, with shouts and cries from several sides; a light redder than the morning, too, began to glare upon the trees, and I soon found that the villains had tracked me into the covert, and had then set fire to the wood to drive me out. I had still hope to baffle them, and for some time wound

through paths they knew not of, leading the lady by the hand. But it proved all in vain: they had guarded the outlets well, and when we issued forth they were upon us. They shouted loud at their double prize; and though they became more reverent when they heard the lady's name, yet were they not the less joyful. On reaching this place they first provided for her comfort. The leader's wife was called, and maids, and women; and with as much ceremony as if the desolate castle had been a court, she was ushered to her chamber. They then turned to me, mocked my contorted back, bade me stretch out my lengthy arms, and made sport of me for some ten minutes, till they bethought them of the Stairless Tower; then their greediness would know no delay. They took me to the foot of it, and told me instantly to show them the way; but I was lord now, and I laughed them to scorn, telling them they should never know from me till they asked me with lowered voices and in humbler terms; till they promised me part of the spoil, and seasoned their offers with fine words. They saw that I mocked them, and thrust me in here, threatening me with torture on the morrow if I still remained refractory. When the morning comes, however, for me they will look in vain. Had they wished really to torture me, the time was when their hands were upon my shoulders."

"But how will you escape?" demanded Albert: "the walls of this prison are thick, the door by which they brought us in is strong; and I see not how any one could free himself from this place without tools for breaking out, such as we do not possess. There are stout bars upon that window, good Walleran; and though they have left me my sword, yet it would take many a long day, I fear, to wrench off those bars, even if it could be done at all."

The old man laughed aloud. "Listen, youth," he replied at length. "I said I would tell you something you did not expect to hear. What if I set you free this very night, this very hour? What if I show you the means by which such a youth as thou art can be back at the castle of Mauvinet before midday to-morrow?"

Albert started up. "Do you jest or speak in earnest?" he exclaimed: "can it be possible?"

"In serious earnest," answered the other; "and so possible is it that I will do it"

"But Adela," said Albert, hesitating; "but the Lady Adela, can I leave her here?"

"What good can you do her by remaining?" demanded the old man.

"But little, in truth," answered Albert; "yet still, while there is a possibility of assisting her, I would fain be near. If we can fly, why can she not fly also? You know where they have placed her: can we not find some means of communicating with her, and telling her what we intend to do?"

"All this is very possible," replied the old man, "and she may even fly, if she will trust herself to you."

"She will," replied Albert, "I am sure she will."

"Be not too sure till you have heard the whole," replied his companion. "There are dangers and difficulties to be encountered, young man, which may not be easily overcome, and it may seem better to her to wait for the ransom from her father."

"At all events, she shall have the choice," replied Albert, "if I can give it her."

"That you shall be enabled to do, if you will," replied the other; "but there may be perils in so doing which even you may not choose to risk."

"None, none!" cried Albert Denyn, resolutely: "there is no difficulty, no danger, I would not undertake to set her free. I would lose this right hand to be the man that gives her liberty."

"Idle talk, idle talk!" said the old man; "boyish passion all! But hear me, and then act as you think fit. Your own liberty is easy of attainment, for there is, in fact, no obstacle in your way."

"How no obstacle?" cried Albert Denyn, "when these barred windows and—"

"Oh the prompt and presumptuous heart of youth!" exclaimed his companion, "never waiting till it understands, seldom even listening till it hears! I tell thee there is, in fact, no obstacle in your way to liberty; but, in order to set her free, you must enter the castle again; you must swim the moat to reach it; you must find your way in darkness and in solitude, through passages which no feet but mine have trodden for many years, and then through rooms where each instant you are likely to be seized and murdered."

"Never mind," cried Albert, "I fear not. I will set her free or die."

"Ay; but when you have found her," added the old man; "when she has agreed to fly with you; when you have led her back by those same difficult passages, remember, there is still the moat to cross, and it is both broad and deep."

"I thought not of that," said Albert, with a sigh, "I thought not of that."

"But in such enterprises we should think of all things," answered Walleran Urgel. "Now will you undertake it?"

"Without a doubt," replied Albert, at once; "without the slightest doubt or hesitation whatsoever. I have swam three times that distance with heavier burdens than she is, and I fear not."

"But she may very likely fear," replied the old man.

"Perhaps she may," replied Albert Denyn; "I am afraid she will; but, at all events, she shall have the choice. I would risk far more for a less object than that."

"Well, then," rejoined his companion, "if you are so resolved, you shall not want the means. Mount upon that stool, and make your way through the window."

"But the bars, the bars," said Albert; "how am I to remove the bars?"

"Take the grating by the lower edge," said the old man, "and pull with all your strength."

Albert did as Walleran bade him, but the bars remained immovable.

"It is in vain," he said, turning round, "it is altogether in vain."

"So soon are youth's best energies checked by disappointment," rejoined the other. "For a great object you must have more than courage, you must have resolution; you must have more even than resolution, you must have perseverance unto death. Now, then, put to your strength and try again, but not as before, not as before! Lift the bars upward. Do they move?"

"Yes, yes," exclaimed Albert, eagerly, "they slide up as if by magic."

"There is no magic like a little knowledge," replied the old man. "Now mark what I say, and proceed gently; for if you do not, you will call listening ears this way, or even, perchance, wake those that sleep. The bars have moved upward, now they will move outward too, and, falling on a hinge below, will make you

a ladder to descend ; but you must hold them fast and let them down gently, or the clang will rouse others with whose presence we can well dispense."

Albert followed the directions he received exactly, and without any trouble lowered down the whole grate, which, being pushed outward when once raised, freed itself from the grooves in which the two ends moved, and, turning on pivots in the lower rim, swung over and hung down against the wall. It required great strength, indeed, to hold the mass of ironwork up so that it descended without noise ; but the joy with which Albert saw the task accomplished would be very, very difficult to tell.

"Now," said the old man, as soon as this was done, "make your way down to the ground beneath the wall ; then, before you cross the moat, creep round along the narrow ridge of earth between the masonry and the water. After you have passed three round towers you will come to a square one which dips itself into the moat, there you must plunge in and swim across ; and then going round to the other side of that square tower, you must enter the moat again and swim over once more. You will there find, not far from the place where you cross, a small archway, like the mouth of a conduit. Bow your head and enter it ; then go on straight. It will lead you to some stairs, which when you have mounted, you will find yourself in a narrow passage, at the end of which there is a door with a latch in the inside ; lift that latch, and the next step takes you into the corridor leading to the chief rooms in the building. Where they have lodged the lady I cannot exactly tell, but I heard some mention made of a small room, which you will find the third upon the left-hand side. There you must try your fortune : I can help you no more, for I have now told you all I know."

"I give you many thanks," replied Albert, "and will now speed away ; but, ere I go, let me at least aid you from the window : you are neither so young nor so strong as I am, and it were well that you have some one with you while you cross the moat."

"Alas ! good youth," replied the old man, "you must leave me behind ; I cannot pass the water as thou canst. My crippled frame could never learn the art which will soon bear thee to the other side."

"But I can support you," replied Albert : "it has ever

been a sport of my youth to carry great weights across the moat at Mauvinet, which is far broader than this seems to be."

"Nay, nay," replied the old man; "go you upon your way. Fear not for me, I say, I shall be safe; and even if they slew me here, what matter? am I not old and crippled, poor, miserable, abandoned?"

"Yes," replied Albert; "but I see, notwithstanding, that you are kind of heart and generous. I found you defending innocence and contending with a villain; and now you take an interest in me, and set me free. I would fain, therefore, aid you before I go."

"What!" exclaimed the old man, as if speaking to himself, "what! one to love and to esteem me! But go, go, good youth; this enterprise will take you time: I will find my way forth alone. I tell you that within these walls, at least, they cannot keep me; but be careful of yourself, for your task is a harder one than mine; and remember, leave the door which leads into the corridor open behind you; for, once closed, you will not find it again." He added some more directions, which Albert stored carefully in his memory, and then, grasping the youth's hand in his large sinewy fingers, he bade God speed him, and aided him to pass through the window.

When he was gone the old man paused for a moment, listening for any sound, and then returned to his seat, saying, "He is noble and good! he is noble and good! What will be the end of all this? what will be the end?"

In the mean while, Albert, dropping from the window, found himself on a small ridge of land immediately under the wall of the castle, with scarcely sufficient footing between him and the moat to admit of his proceeding step by step in the direction which he had been told to follow. Sometimes, however, the space grew wider, and enabled him to go on more rapidly; but his progress was necessarily so slow for some way that he was tempted more than once to plunge into the moat as the shortest method.

At length, however, a tall, square tower presented itself, much larger than any of the others, with its foundations dipping into the moat, as the old man had described; and without farther hesitation Albert plunged in, and swam round till he reached the same shelf of land which recommenced on the other side of the tower.

After some search he found the small arch to which he had been directed, though the lower part of it was partially filled with water; and entering, in profound darkness, he found his way along, feeling with his hands against the wall, and sometimes stumbling over pieces of stone which had fallen from above, showing that no careful eye had for many years examined the spot to take precautions against decay. The description of Walleran Urgel had been so exact that the youth met with no great difficulty, and he soon reached the door, and found the latch which caused it to open.

Albert raised it gently, and the door moved back without noise; but, the moment it did so, a bright light burst in upon him, and, instead of seeing before him a corridor, as he had expected, he found himself entering a small chamber in which a light was burning. On two sides of the room appeared the old black-oak woodwork which had originally lined the corridor, but on the other two sides the walls were composed of rough thick planking, bearing the marks of the saw fresh upon it, so that it was evident to Albert Denyn that the adventurers had converted the corridor into separate apartments since they had taken possession of the castle.

The light which struck him as he opened the door proceeded from a tall sconce containing three lamps, which apparently had not been trimmed for some hours; and Albert drew back as he marked the interior of the room, not doubting, from all he saw, that he was in the chamber of one of the free leaders. A large bed, occupying at least one fourth of the small room, stood in the corner opposite, with the thick green curtains drawn closely round it. But all within was perfectly silent and still, so that it was clear the tenant of the room was either absent or asleep.

To advance offered certainly no small risk, and yet Albert could not make up his mind to return, and leave the task he had undertaken unaccomplished. He paused, then, and gazed into the room for a moment, hesitating how to act; but the next instant he drew his sword and took a few steps forward, resolved at all events to go on. There was a door on either side in the new partitions. That on the left was fastened by two large wooden bolts, and against it lay a casque and a cuirass, with a pair of heavy steel gloves, which it seemed scarcely possible to move without making some

noise ; but the other door, to which Albert next turned, was secured in a different manner. It opened into the room, and across it had been laid one of those movable cupboards, few of which have descended to the present day, although their place has been supplied by things much less convenient than themselves. It must have cost some trouble to place it in the position which it then occupied, and while it there remained, no man, unassisted, could have forced the door open from without. Piled up upon it, also, were several other articles of furniture ; and when Albert perceived all this caution to prevent any one entering the chamber during the slumbers of its occupant, a hope came upon him which made his heart beat wildly.

A moment after, his eye lighted upon some of the apparel of a lady ; and instead of trying, as he had at first proposed, to make his way forth undiscovered by one of the doors, he now gently approached the bed and drew back one of the curtains.

His hopes had not deceived him. Before his eyes, overpowered by slumber, lay Adela de Mauvinet, with one beautiful arm bent underneath her head, and the other resting on the cover of the bed, while the fair hand dropped gracefully over the edge. Her rich brown hair, which she had unloosed ere she cast herself down to take the repose which she so much needed, but almost feared to indulge, fell round her face and over her shoulder in beautiful profusion ; and, lovely as Albert had always thought her, she seemed fairer, brighter than ever to his eyes, as she there lay, buried in deep, calm sleep, in the midst of such perils as those that surrounded her.

He stood and gazed upon her for several minutes, drinking deep draughts of love, if I may so express it, till at length the resolutions which he had that very night formed came back to his mind, and he instantly asked himself how he might best wake her without giving her alarm. At length, sheathing his sword, he knelt down by the bedside, threw back the curtain that the light might fall full upon him, and then taking the hand that dropped over the edge, he pressed his lips tenderly, but respectfully upon it.

Adela instantly woke, started, raised herself partly on her arm, and gazed wildly at the youth as he knelt beside her. As soon as she saw who it was, however, a bright smile of joy lighted up her countenance. None

of the particulars of her situation seemed to have been forgotten even in sleep ; for, raising her finger, she said, in a low tone, " Oh Albert, is it possible ? How came you hither ? It is indeed joy to see you here ; but speak low, speak low, for they are in that room, and there are people all around us."

" I am here, lady, to set you free," replied Albert, in a whisper. " I have been a prisoner like you, and have found means to escape ; by those means also I can set you free ; but I must not conceal from you that there are dangers and difficulties in the way, though I would not quit this place without offering you the opportunity of flying also."

" But how came you here ?" demanded Adela. " I have been so anxious about you ever since you left me ; for you were scarcely gone ere these men passed by, and I feared that they would find you contending with that base man Caillet."

Albert told her that they had done so : but she would not be satisfied until he had related all that had befallen him ; and the interest and the pity that she showed as he proceeded were sweet, but dangerous to his heart.

In return, while she related a part of what had occurred to her, she dwelt much and long upon the apprehensions she had entertained for him, speaking little of her own fears and sufferings ; and it was a strange and somewhat agitating conversation for both that took place during the next half hour, while, with Albert kneeling by her bedside, with whispered words, and eyes gazing into each other's, they poured forth every feeling and thought of their bosoms—except that one passion which gave tone and depth to all the rest.

It may well be asked, " Was that one passion, then, not spoken ? Was it possible, at such a time and in such circumstances, not to open the gates of the heart and set the imprisoned secret free ?"

It was not spoken. Not a word did Albert utter that he would not have uttered in the halls of Mauvinet : there was as much deep respect in manner and in gesture ; but from his countenance he could not banish what he felt : it sparkled in his eyes ; it was heard, too, in his tone, whenever Adela's dangers, or griefs, or sufferings were mentioned. Neither did she name the name of love ; nor, indeed, did she think of it at that moment. In the agitation, the fears, the cares, the

hopes of such a situation, she looked upon the youth beside her only as the companion of her infancy and her girlhood; as the person in whom she had most confidence on earth, to whom she could speak as to a brother. If her tones were those of love, if her look was that of deep affection, it was that the moment was one of those when circumstances break down the barriers which we raise in our hearts against our own feelings, and when the stream of passion flows forth without our will, mingling with the whole current of our actions.

However that may be, during that night a new consciousness came upon the heart of Albert Denyn—the consciousness that he was beloved; and, however he might school himself, he could not so far play the hypocrite with his own soul as to wish that it were otherwise.

Though much was said and many a thing was told, their conversation was but short, for their words were quick as the time required. And though Albert could have remained there in that sweet intercourse forever, it became necessary that he should press Adela to decide whether she would attempt to fly with him or not. He informed her of all she would have to encounter; he showed her that he should be obliged to swim with her across the moat; and, after a moment's hesitation, she replied,

"No, Albert, no; you shall not risk your life for me any more."

"There is no danger, dear lady," he replied, "there is no risk of that kind: I know I can do it with ease: I only fear for you, who have suffered so terribly already; I dread that the cold and the night wandering might injure, nay, even kill you."

"Perhaps it might," she said, in a sad tone, "perhaps it might; and I cling weakly to life, Albert, I know not why."

"Oh yes, live, live, dear lady!" replied Albert, "live for brighter days! live to make others happy, and to be happy also yourself!"

Adela made no reply for some moments; but her eyes filled with tears, and a look of deep sadness came over her whole countenance. "No," she said at length, "no, I will not fly at such a risk to you. Besides, I know my father will right gladly pay the ransom that they fix; and these men have treated me with all honour and some

kindness, so that I have nothing to fear. Their chief himself, to give me security in my chamber, blocked up the door as you see there; the other door leads to the room where sleeps his child, and there are also bolts which no strength could break. He showed me these things himself, and his wife gave me all comfort, and promised me her aid and protection. Under these circumstances it were wrong to risk so much. Go, then, Albert, go, and tell my father my situation: I know I need not ask him to set me free speedily. You will reach him, probably, even before the letter which they have made me write can inform him of my fate. Tell him I am well; far better, indeed, in health than I could by any means have expected. I must not add that I am happy," she continued, "for that I am not—perhaps may never be so again."

Albert gazed sadly on the ground, but made no reply; and after a moment Adela added, "Now go, Albert, now go: may Heaven send you a blessing for all that you have done for me!"

"One thing more, dear lady," replied Albert, "one thing more before I do as you bid me: recollect that the door by which I entered here, and which you see stand open there, is unknown to these people themselves. That passage might afford you a place of refuge in case their conduct towards you should change at any time. On the other side there is a lock; but I must see how it can be opened from this room."

It was not without difficulty that the method was discovered, for the woodwork fitted so close as to afford not the slightest indication of an opening when it was shut. At length, however, having found the way of closing and unclosing it at pleasure, and explained the means to Adela, Albert again approached to bid her adieu, and once more knelt by her side to kiss her hand.

"Oh! Albert," she said, in the same low tone in which they had hitherto spoken, "it is a terrible thing to bid you go, and leave me here alone, but it must be so at length. It is very, very terrible;" and she bent down her head till her eyes almost rested on his shoulder, while her tears fell thick and fast.

"Go, Albert," she continued at length, "go—I will be thus selfish no longer! Go at once! Fare you well, fare you well; I shall never forget you, I shall never forget your kindness. Now leave me without another word, for I am weak, and overcome already."

Albert felt that it would be best to depart; and only pausing to press his lips again upon her hand, he tore himself away and left her. In a few minutes he had passed through the long passage which conducted to the moat, and with a feeling of reckless self-abandonment, he plunged in without a moment's pause or thought.

The noise of his sudden leap into the water called the attention of some one above, and a cry of "Who goes there?" was heard, warning him to be more cautious. He made no reply, but swam gently on; and he could hear the man say to himself, "It must be a dog: I will give him a shot, at all events." The next instant, the twang of a crossbow met his ear, and a quarrel struck the water close beside him.

It was luckily too dark for anything to be seen distinctly; and, proceeding as quietly and silently as possible, Albert reached the other side of the moat, and for a moment lay still under the shadow of the bank. The heedless soldier above seemed quite satisfied with what he had done, and in a few minutes walked on, whistling a light air; while Albert, on his part, crept slowly up the bank, and was soon among the fields of the open country.

All was dark, however; there were woods, and orchards, and vineyards around, and, entangled among them, Albert could for some time find no path, but wandered without guide, and with no knowledge whither he was directing his steps. At length he came upon a road which, though neither very large nor very good, he judged to be much used, from the ruts and irregularities which it presented; and, following it for about half a mile, the youth came suddenly upon a rising ground, whence he could discover somewhat to his surprise and consternation, the faint outline of the castle he had just quitted rising at the distance of a few hundred yards. He was once more turning away to seek some other path, when he was startled by the cry of "Who goes there?" and the next instant rough hands were laid upon his shoulders.

## CHAPTER III.

LEAVING ALBERT Denyn in the hands of his captors, we must turn to follow the proceedings of the Count de Mauvinet and the Captal de Buch, who were not long in hearing news of the body of adventurers which had taken possession of the castle on the hill. Every peasant that they met with when day dawned gave them some tidings of a detachment from the famous company of Sir Robert Knowles who had lately established themselves in the neighbourhood, and laid the country under contribution as far as Mans and La Flèche. None, indeed, could give any information regarding the exact fate of the Lady Adela; but some had heard a troop of horse pass their cottages during the night; and the two noblemen were so thoroughly convinced that the lady had fallen into the hands of these adventurers, that, after giving their horses a few hours' rest at the first village they could find, they marched on, guided by some of the peasantry, and only halted at length in order to send back messengers to Mauvinet, with directions to call forth every retainer of the house, and bring them to a certain spot by daybreak on the following morning.

Some consultation was held as to whether it would be better to send a summons, requiring the marauders in the castle to give up their prisoners, or to proceed at once by force. But the captal strongly urged the necessity of giving no intimation of their purpose to the adventurers till the last moment; and the count yielded, although his deep anxiety for his child made him desirous of taking the most speedy means that could be adopted for bringing her captivity to an end. No rest nor sleep was his portion during the night, though he adopted the best measures that circumstances permitted him to use for refreshing his men and horses against the following day.

The captal, on his part, not forgetting the vow that he had made, entered no house, but laid himself down in the open fields, with his men around him, and his naked sword by his side. An hour before daylight the two leaders met, to consult together upon their after pro-

ceedings ; and before they separated, several bands of the retainers of the house of Mauvinet came in, and reported that others were following hard behind. The whole country, they said, was rising in indignation and alarm ; and several of the vassals of other noble houses in the neighbourhood were found to have joined themselves to the troops of the Lord of Mauvinet, so that an overpowering force might soon be expected, ready to act at once against the adventurers.

After a short conference, the Captal de Buch proposed to his friend to go forward with his men and reconnoitre the enemy's position, while the count himself remained behind, to collect the various bands as they came up. The captal promised to return before day had dawned more than half an hour ; and his proposal being agreed to, he set out at once, accompanied by the troop of twenty or five-and-twenty men which had followed him to Mauvinet.

It was somewhat later than the hour he had specified ere he did indeed return, but then he came with a smiling countenance, assuring the count that the place was one of no great strength, and could not make any formidable resistance. The array which presented itself to his eyes on rejoining the count seemed to warrant well the expectation of speedy success ; for more than four hundred men were now in the field ; volunteers were coming in every moment, and various implements for assaulting the castle had already been provided. No farther delay took place ; the troops instantly were put in motion ; and the Lord of Mauvinet and his friend led the way, a few hundred yards in advance, at the head of a small body of chosen men.

The whole aspect of the scene, as they approached the castle, seemed to show that the free companions had not the slightest idea of being attacked ; and in passing through a small hollow-way at about a mile's distance from the fortress, the count and his companions came suddenly upon an armed man, riding on with the utmost tranquillity. The space between him and them, when he first appeared, was not more than forty or fifty yards, and, reining up his horse quickly, he seemed about to fly ; but, perceiving levelled lances and preparations for instant pursuit, he laid down his bridle and halted, waiting till they came up. His appearance left no doubt of his being one of the adventurers ; and he

was instantly surrounded by the men of Mauvinet, who, perhaps, might have treated him ill had it not been for the interference of the captal; for the Lord of Mauvinet himself was too much enraged to respect the character of soldiers in so lawless a body of marauders.

"Nay, nay, count," said the captal, seeing the fierce look which the father of Adela bent upon the prisoner: "remember, these are all good men-at-arms, most of them gentlemen of birth; and the unhappy license of the times has justified things that in other days were unjustifiable."

"I shall ever give heed to your voice, my noble friend," replied the Lord of Mauvinet, "when it is raised in a righteous cause; but you will not expect me to spare men who, without the warrant of actual war, do acts that actual war itself has never sanctioned—carry off women and children from their parents, and wage dishonest hostilities in time of truce against the innocent and unoffending. The slaughter of my peasantry were enough, but the outrage offered to my child leaves no room for mercy or forbearance; and a short shrift and a neighbouring tree is all the lenity I can show."

"Yet listen, my good lord," rejoined the captal: "this man may, perhaps, if you grant him pardon, give us some good information regarding the enemy. Hark, fellow—you look wondrous pale for one who has chosen so perilous a trade—stand forward, and try, by answering truly, to save your life. You come from the castle of La Trie aux Bois: is it not so?"

"Yes, noble sir," replied the man, who evidently did not like the aspect of death in the shape which it now assumed; "but I have only been there three days, and have had no share in what has been done there."

"How came you to go thither at all?" demanded the captal.

"I carried letters, noble sir," answered the man, "from good Sir Robert Knowles to worthy Captain Griffith."

"Ha! my old companion Knowles!" cried the captal; "is he come so near! and Griffith, too! he is a good soldier, if ever man was. Nor is he discourteous either. The Lady Adela will suffer no wrong at his hands. I shall like well to try twelve strokes of a good sword with him, and will, please Heaven, ere the world be three hours older."

"Ah, sir, you reckon ill," rejoined the adventurer: "he left the castle this morning in the gray, with a score of lances, to confer with good Sir Robert; nor will he return till to-morrow at noon. They say there is some difference between them, but I know not."

"And whither were you going now?" asked the count, who had hitherto remained silent: "you seemed in great haste."

"I was carrying a letter, noble sir," replied the man.

"What, another letter!" exclaimed the Captal de Buch. "By your leave, Sir Letter-carrier, we will see this epistle."

"It is directed to the noble Lord of Mauvinet," replied the adventurer, "and is written by the lady they took yesterday."

"Then give it to me instantly," exclaimed the count: "quick, fellow! quick! or we will take it in a way that may be somewhat more speedy."

The prisoner, whose senses were so far confused that he did not yet understand that one of the personages who spoke to him was the very nobleman to whom the letter was addressed, gave it up with evident reluctance; and—first kissing the handwriting of his beloved child—the count tore it open and read. The captal watched his countenance narrowly, and saw, with no small delight, that the brow of Adela's father grew brighter, and that a look of relief came over his whole face.

"She is well, thanks be to God!" exclaimed the count, turning to his friend. "She is well, and they have used her with all respect and courtesy; but tell me, my good Lord Captal, did ever mortal man hear such insolence as this? They come hither, into the heart of the land, carry off our children, and boldly put them to ransom, as if there were a war proclaimed against babes and ladies. They ask a thousand crowns of gold, and bid me ransom my daughter at once, as if she were a knight captured in fair fight. By St. Maurice, this is too much!"

"Do they mention the villain who carried her off?" demanded the captal: "it would seem they have taken her out of his hands."

"They neither mention him nor my poor boy Albert," replied the count. "Of the one I will have signal vengeance, and for the safety of the other good account. That youth is like a son to me, captal, and I will reckon

with that man severely who does him wrong. But let us march on, and by the way speak of this ransoming. What say you: should I give it?"

"No, my good lord, no," replied the captal. "I can feel that you are anxious for your daughter, but they dare not—it is impossible—they dare not injure her, I am sure. My oath is that I will set her free, and, of course, that oath implies by force of arms. It I must keep; and I will answer for it that the lady shall suffer no wrong, although these men perchance may threaten it. Let us march on, my lord; and, bringing this man along with us, use him for what purposes we may think fit hereafter."

As was very natural, the Lord of Mauvinet could hardly, in his anxiety for his daughter, feel satisfied with the assurance of the captal; but still, as is often the case with all men, he would not show the weakness that he felt, and agreed to the proposal of his friend, though he would fain have yielded to the demand of ransom, however unreasonable, and secured his child's safety before he sought vengeance for the insult that had been offered to him.

Marching on, then, they soon came within sight of the castle; but as they rode forward, upon a rising ground which looked down upon it, the count observed a small party of horsemen coming up at some distance, nearly on a parallel line with his own forces.

"Who are these?" he exclaimed, speaking to the captal, "who are these, my good lord? We had better send out to cut them off."

"No, no," replied the captal, smiling, "they are my own men. I thought it best, when I returned to you just now, to leave a party upon that road, both to bring us any intelligence, and to cut off the enemy, should they think fit to send out for aid in that direction. My people will come up against the other side of the castle, and make all sure there."

"Well bethought, well bethought, my noble friend," replied the count: "we will teach those hardy plunderers another tale. Bring that fellow hither from behind; and let Bertrand, with the men from the abbey, sweep round to the right, while we advance against the barbi-can. Now, noble captal, where will you command?"

"Upon the left, my good lord," answered the captal. "Methinks I will attack the wall near yon square tow-

er: it is there, most likely, that they have lodged the lady, and I would fain have it no other hand than mine which sets her free."

"But the wall seems strong and high there," replied the Lord of Mauvinet.

"The more the honour of scaling it," said the captal, with a laugh. "We must show them what the chivalry of France and England can do when united. Let us ride on together, however; but first send on this fellow to summon them to set the lady free, and then we will act as we may find needful."

The captal's plan was followed; the troops of Mauvinet advanced in somewhat *irregular order*, if such an expression may be permitted; for the best arrayed feudal armies of that day seldom presented any very great appearance of discipline; and troops so hastily called together as those now before the castle could not be expected to equal a long-organized force. They made a gallant show, however, as they came up with their armour shining in the sun, and their pennons fluttering in the breeze, while the castle—which, when they first approached it, had appeared almost entirely deserted, with nothing but two soldiers pacing upon the walls, and a few men loitering about the gate of the barbican—suddenly displayed an aspect of far greater bustle and activity. Soldiers were seen running here and there, the drawbridge was suddenly drawn up, the portcullis let fall, the walls became strongly manned, and all the bustle and agitation of a place suddenly and unexpectedly attacked showed itself in the fortress.

At the distance of an arrow's flight from the barbican the count and the captal paused upon a little mound, and for a few moments gazed upon the active scene before them. The prisoner was then called up, and the count informed him that he spared his life upon the condition that he should go into the castle and bear the message with which he was about to charge him.

"Tell them," he said, "that I have come to punish them for their unheard-of insolence, in daring to carry off my child almost from my very side, and for their discourtesy and unknighly baseness, in tearing a lady from her home, and demanding a ransom for her liberty. Bid them, if they would escape my utmost vengeance, instantly set free the Lady Adela de Mauvinet; bid them surrender to me, tied hand and foot, the villain

named William Caillet, who dared to carry her off; and also bid them send back to me, or give a good account of, the youth named Albert Denyn, whom I have reason to believe has fallen into their power. Go, and bring me back a speedy answer."

The man hesitated before he departed, and even when he had taken two or three steps came back and said, "I am afraid, my noble lord, they will not suffer me to return."

"Thou hadst better find means to return," said the captal, sternly; "for be perfectly assured, my friend, that within one hour from this time I will speak with thee in that castle, if thou art not here before; and what I say then will not please thee. I mean, fellow, that thy life shall answer for thy disobedience; and that, if thou art not here ere our trumpets sound to the attack, it were better for thee to seek a priest quickly, for thou wilt have short time for shrift."

The tone in which the captal spoke was as significant as his words, and the man went away somewhat pale in the face.

"The villain ought to be hanged for his cowardice," said the captal. "He is one of those who hang upon the skirts of braver rascals than himself, finding just sufficient valour in a multitude of companions to carry him through a general battle. We will give them some ten minutes, my lord, to send their answer. I have despatched two or three of my people down to the village that we passed on the right, to seek some of their masons' ladders. We must contrive to join two together to reach that wall, and even then we shall have some difficulty."

"Better by far," said the count, "join your efforts to mine, my lord, and force our way in together at this gate: I fear you will make no impression on the wall."

"Will you bet me a Barbary horse," said the captal, laughingly, "that I am not in before you, my lord? But see, my men are already making preparations; and, as I live, here comes our messenger again. He has had a speedy answer."

The man approached slowly, and evidently with trepidation, which the looks of the captal and the count were not well calculated to remove. "Well, fellow," exclaimed the Lord of Mauvinet, ere he reached them, "what is the reply?"

"I dare not give it you, my lord," said the man; "I dare not give it you, unless you promise me your pardon."

"Well, well, you shall be pardoned," joined in the captal; "and if my Lord of Mauvinet follows my advice, he will shave your head, and thrust you into a monastery."

"Speak, man, speak!" cried the count, "or, by Heaven, I will thrust my sword through thee."

"Well, then, my lord," replied the messenger, "though I beseech your forgiveness for speaking it, the Captain Maillot, who now commands in the absence of the Welshman, bade me give you this answer at once: That as to William Caillet, he knows nothing of him; that as for Albert Denyn, you may seek him where you will find him; and that as for the Lady Adela, she shall not have her liberty unless you pay the thousand crowns demanded."

"Corteous, modest, and reasonable," said the captal; "but what more, my friend, what more? I see there is something more under that white face."

"It must be told," said the man, with a sigh, "and it is this: He bade me say to the count, that the safety of his daughter depends upon his withdrawing his banner instantly from before those walls. He spoke it in harder terms than I dare name, and I believe he will keep his word."

The count gazed with a countenance of anguish and anxiety in the face of the captal, struggling between apprehension for his child and the consciousness that his honour as a knight was pledged to resent the insult offered to him. The face of the captal gave him no relief, though it was certainly much calmer than he expected to see it; yet there was a heavy frown upon that leader's brow, which spoke at once the determination that the count feared they must both take.

"My lord," said the captal, after a moment's pause, "your situation is painful, but yield not, I beseech you, to apprehension! In truth, there is nothing to fear. Again I pledge myself that there shall no harm happen. However, do you as you like: my answer I will send to these men myself. Go back to them," he continued, turning to the messenger, "go back to them, and say that the Captal de Buch has pledged himself to set free the Lady Adela de Mauvinet; that he will not only set

her free, but punish them who keep her; and that he vows by his faith and honour as a Christian knight, if he find that insult and injury of any kind has been offered to the lady, not contented with putting every man that he finds within the castle to the sword, he will hang Maillot and twelve of his companions by their feet from the walls of the castle, till death deliver them, or the ravens eat them living. Go tell them that I swear this on my honour and on my faith: now let me see what they dare do. Give me my casque. What! you are afraid? Well, poor fool, I will go myself. My Lord of Mauvinet, I beseech you prepare all means for instant attack. I see they have brought up the ladders there to my men. The instant I have given my message, I will ride round and scale the walls. You, at the same moment, force your way in here, while others attack at different points. They cannot long hold out against such a force as we have here: it is a place of no strength—a mere cottage. Be of good cheer, my lord, be of good cheer; no harm shall happen."

The count shook his head mournfully, saying, "We must do what our honour requires, Lord Captal: God give us a good issue."

"Fear not, fear not," exclaimed the captal, who had by this time put on his casque; and, thus saying, he galloped forward with the two or three men whom he had kept with him, approaching the barbican, the wall of which, at this moment, was covered with men-at-arms.

When the captal was about forty or fifty yards from that outwork, the count and those who stood beside him perceived the adventurers bend their bows, and in a moment several arrows fell around the captal.

The Lord of Mauvinet's indignation was roused more vehemently than ever; and, waving his hand to his followers, he exclaimed, "On, on, to the barbican! A purse of gold and knighthood for the first man who crosses the bridge!"

The retainers of Mauvinet were in movement in a moment; and, dashing on towards the gates, they arrived just as the captal was once more turning away, shaking his fist fiercely towards the men upon the walls. His visor was up, and they could see that he had been slightly wounded in the face, but his countenance was all courage, and even gayety; and he waved his hand to the count, crying,

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"On, on, my lord!" while he himself galloped round towards the point of attack he had chosen.

The enemy sent a flight of arrows after him, but their attention was soon called in another direction; for the men of Mauvinet rushing forward, soon reached the foot of the barbican; and so fiercely did they ply the axe and hammer, that in a few minutes, notwithstanding all the shouts and cries that echoed around, the crashing sound of large masses of wood torn off from the gate, and the giving way of the ironwork within in several places, showed the besieged that the outwork could not be maintained any longer.

As soon as they perceived that such was the case, they made signs at once to their companions on the other side of the moat to let down the drawbridge, and a general rush took place among the soldiery in the barbican to make their escape. Ere they could all pass, however, the gate which had been attacked gave way at once, with a tremendous crash; the troops of Mauvinet rushed in; and, before the bridge could be raised, several of those upon it were thrown over into the moat; and a number of assailants rushing across, with repeated blows of their axes cut through the woodwork where the chains were fastened, and the pont-levis, which was slowly rising, fell again with great force.

The portcullis, however, was down, the gates closed, and the walls above covered with archers: but the barbican served the Count de Mauvinet as a fort; and while a number of his men plied the bars of the portcullis with blows of the axe, others with crossbows kept up an answering discharge against those upon the battlements.

In an instant afterward, however, the Lord of Mauvinet suddenly cried, "Stop, stop, every man of you!" and all eyes turning to the gallery above the gate, beheld a man-at-arms dragging forth Adela by the hand to the very spot where all the bolts were directed.

## CHAPTER XV.

THE moment that the man who held Adela by the arm saw that the flight of quarrels and arrows had ceased, he threw up the visor of his casque, exposing to view the fierce and dogged countenance of the man called Maillot. By his gestures he was evidently speaking aloud; but for a moment or two the noise and confusion, both on the battlements and under the walls, prevented one word that he uttered from being heard.

The Lord of Mauvinet eagerly waved his hand, however, exclaiming, "Silence, silence! Hear what he says! Not a word, upon your lives!"

A sudden pause instantly succeeded; and the contrast was strange, when, after that scene of strife and confusion, and shouts and outcries, a deep stillness suddenly fell over the whole scene, and a robin, unscared by all that had preceded, was heard singing in a willow-tree by the side of the moat.

"Mark," cried Maillot, rolling his fierce eyes over the party that stood under the barbican and upon the bridge, "Mark, and take warning, every man of you! Another bolt from a crossbow shot against this castle, another blow from an axe struck against that gate, and I cast her headlong down! I know how to deal with you, Lord of Mauvinet! You now know how to have your daughter without ransom. If you like her better dead than living, bend your bows! If not, draw off your men, for I am in no mood for jesting."

The heart of the Lord of Mauvinet burned within him. To be foiled by a pitiful band of adventurers in the attack of so poor a place, was a disgrace which no knightly heart could well endure; and yet to risk his daughter's life, or by his own act to see her slain before his face, was what could scarcely be expected of a father.

"Villain," he cried, after looking round his people for a moment, as if seeking counsel, "villain, you triumph now; but the time will come when I will have vengeance, and bitter shall that vengeance be!"

"Vengeance!" shouted Maillot, at the top of his voice. "Vengeance, by the Lord! If such be your purpose, let

your vengeance come now! I will have mine first;" and, at the same moment, he seized Adela with a tighter grasp, and dragged her a step forward, as if to cast her over the battlements.

The poor girl's shrieks rent the air; and, though many a bow was drawn by the party below, no one durst shoot at the murderous villain, for fear of striking the object of his cruelty. The Lord of Mauvinet, with his eye fixed upon him, stretched out his hand for a crossbow, resolved to risk all to save her from the terrible death that menaced her; but in the midst of that moment of horror there came a loud cry from the angle of the wall close to Maillot, and the savage paused, turning his head to the side from which the sounds proceeded.

In an instant, two soldiers who stood beside him were dashed to the ground; and before he, or those who were below, could well see what was coming, with a spring like that of a tiger the Captal de Buch was upon him; and, wrenching his grasp from Adela, who sunk fainting upon the ground, the knight clasped the brutal plunderer in his powerful arms, and a terrible, though momentary struggle took place between them, while the swords of Albert Denyn and a number of the captal's followers kept the space around clear of the adventurers, who hurried boldly up to the defence of their companion.

"Now, wretch, now!" exclaimed the captal, dragging the marauder forward to the edge of the battlement in spite of his resistance, "now you shall taste the same fate yourself that you destined for another."

The man, finding himself mastered, clung to the captal with the strength both of despair and rage, determined to drag him over the low coping, if he were forced to try the terrible leap himself. Still the captal drew him on to the very edge, lifting him in his athletic arms to cast him over, while Maillot twined around him for life and vengeance; and twice they struggled together fiercely, the one to retain his grasp, the other to cast it off. At length, however, the knight, as if wearied with the strife, and resolved to slay his adversary with the sword, relaxed his hold, and Maillot suddenly drew back from his fierce embrace; but the instant he did so, the captal, without drawing his sword, smote him in the face with his gauntleted hand, and the man fell prostrate before him. Like lightning the knight caught him again in his arms, swung him high above the parapet, and, ere he

could resume his grasp, pitched him over into mid-air, with a scream of terror bursting from his lips. The unhappy wretch fell first upon the chain of the drawbridge, and a gush of blood upon the planks showed the terrible force of his descent. He then rolled over with a deep groan and plunged into the moat, sinking at once to the bottom, and, encumbered with his armour, never rising again.

"On, on! my Lord of Mauvinet," shouted the captal, waving his hand to the count and drawing his sword. "Your child is safe, and we will soon open the gates for you. The dogs have had their day, but it is over now."

Thus saying, he gently raised Adela from the ground; and though he dared not at that moment pause to call her back to recollection, he placed her safely in an angle of the wall, with her head leaning upon the battlements, while he hastened to head his men in the fierce contention which they were waging around him with the rest of the adventurers. The captal's troop, indeed, was much outnumbered by the men within the castle: but the attack upon the gate had been renewed by the Lord of Mauvinet and his party; and scattered, confused, and disheartened at finding the enemy within their walls, the free companions offered an ill-conducted but desperate resistance. Albert Denyn and the rest were already driving them on towards the court, when the captal again took the lead, and his greater military skill and experience at once taught him to act upon a different plan.

"To the gate, Albert, to the gate!" he cried: "always keep open your communication with your own friends. Ten of you hold firm the way up to the platform—Albert and the rest follow me. This way must lead to the gate!" and, rushing on at full speed, he soon turned the angle of the court, where a considerable body of the marauders were defending the entrance against the troops of Mauvinet.

The attack upon their rear at once put them into confusion; and while a terrible slaughter took place among them, two or three of the captal's men forced their way on till they reached the chains of the gate, and drew up the portcullis. The troops of Mauvinet rushed in, and in a moment the castle was gained; while the adventurers, flying from court to court, for some time received little quarter from their enraged enemies.

When Adela opened her eyes, and raised her head

from the stone against which it lay, she found herself quite alone, though the confused sounds which met her ears on every side, the clang of arms, the shouts, the cries, the screams, recalled painfully to her mind all the terrible circumstances of her situation, and showed her that the strife was still going on. She sat up and listened, with an aching brow and a palpitating heart; but the noise seemed to diminish and come from a greater distance, and then a loud shout and some laughter, mingling with the sadder sounds, announced that some party had won the day.

With fear and hope struggling together, Adela raised herself faintly from the ground, and gazed over the country from the battlements. The multitude which had appeared before the walls when last her terrified eyes had been turned to the slope before the castle, looking for help and consolation in her deadly terror, and finding none, had now totally disappeared. A few men were seen in the barbican, a few standing inactive upon the bridge; but, with joy inexpressible, Adela recognised the colours of the house of Mauvinet among them, and in a moment after some rapid steps were heard approaching.

It was more with hope than fear that the heart of Adela beat now; and, supporting herself by the wall, she gazed eagerly forward, till those who approached had turned the angle of the wall, and she beheld the form of the Captal de Buch, followed by two or three of her father's attendants. A sudden terror then took possession of her regarding her father, and she exclaimed, "My father! my Lord Captal, where is my father?"

"He is not hurt! No, dear lady, no," exclaimed the captal, "he is not hurt; and, thanks be to Heaven, very few are so but those who themselves deserved to suffer for their baseness. I have outrun your father, and come hither to seek you and bring you to him. He is even now in the castle hall, caring for the wounded. The fierceness of the strife is over; those who still resist are not many, and doubtless they will be received to mercy if they will yield."

"Oh! show them mercy, my Lord Captal," cried Adela, eagerly: "we should not be cruel because they have been so."

"Come, then, lady, and plead for them yourself," said the captal. "The whole body will soon be in your father's presence. Lean upon my arm, for I see you are

faint and weak ; but I trust you will soon be well again, now this sad day's business is so happily accomplished. These are thunder showers, lady, that beat down the flowers ; but they raise their heads refreshed when the storm is over."

Adela leaned upon the capital's arm as he desired her, for she could not in courtesy refuse ; but, to say truth, she would more willingly have gone alone, although of the two things which alone remained upon her memory concerning her deliverance from the grasp of Maillot, the most prominent was that it was the capital who had come to her aid.

The other recollection that came back to her mind was a faint image of Albert Denyn, sword in hand, among a fierce troop of the adventurers ; and she would fain have inquired for him, she would fain have asked if he was hurt. But her lips refused to pronounce his name, and she suffered the capital to lead her on in silence. A few steps brought them down a gentle slope which led from the platform above the gate into the outer court, and Adela shuddered and shut her eyes, as she was obliged to choose her steps among the dead that lay opposite the entrance, and the pools of blood which had collected round them.

"The struggle was fierce here," said the capital, feeling her hand tremble as he led her on ; "the inner court is clearer, however. Morvin," he continued, speaking to one of the men who followed him, "let those bodies be looked to ; there may be some of the poor wretches not dead yet. That man's arm moved as we passed—his with the red feather."

Thus saying, he led Adela onward, up the steps to the door of the great hall, from which issued forth the sounds of many voices. It was a large vaulted chamber, fully fifty feet in length ; but it appeared at that moment so crowded by different groups of followers attached to the house of Mauvinet, that at first Adela could not see to the other end, though the towering height of the capital gave him a view over the heads of the rest.

"There is your father," he said : "the strife is all over now, it seems." But, at the same moment, some of those who were near the door turned their eyes upon the lady, and one or two voices pronounced "The Lady Adela !"

All the retainers hastened to make way for her ; while

the count sprang forward from the other end of the hall, and, casting away his bloody sword, clasped her tenderly to his bosom.

Father and child both wept for several moments in silence, while the armed men with whom the hall was filled formed a circle round; and Albert Denyn, who had raised the count's sword, stood a step behind him, with a cheek pale with emotion, and eyes bent upon the ground.

The count had not recovered himself enough to speak to any one, when, from the other side of the hall, a group of several persons entered, among whom were six or seven men with their hands tied, with four women and an infant.

"Oh, my father!" exclaimed Adela, "spare them, spare them, and treat them kindly, for well and kindly have they treated me. Weep not, lady," she continued, advancing to one of the women and taking her hand, "my father will show you all courtesy for my sake, I am sure."

"I war not with women and children," said the count, speaking to the wife of Griffith: "I leave that to those who have cast off the character of soldiers and of men, to assume the habits of savage beasts. Madam, you shall be kindly dealt with, and sent in safety whithersoever you wish to go. Lead the lady and her women away, Montel, and with ten of the freshest horses guide her safely to whatever town she thinks fit to name. Be quick," he added, in a lower tone; "for, as she has held companionship with the men around, she may feel it bitter to witness what is in store for them. Away!"

The old officer he spoke of conducted the wife of Griffith and her companions from the hall; and the count, as soon as they were gone, turned with a frowning brow to the men who had been brought in, saying to one of his own people that stood near, "They have been fairly chosen by lot from among the prisoners!"

"They have, my lord," replied the man: "they drew the lots themselves."

"Now, then," continued the count, sternly, "before I doom you to the death you have all deserved, answer me these questions: first, by what authority you wage war here in France in time of truce?"

"By my own," replied one of the men, boldly. "Come, come, sir: there is not much to be said upon the matter.

We have fought you, and you have fought us. You have won the day, and can do with us what you will. Hang us, if you please, but do not keep us standing here talking about it. What signifies it to any one whether King Edward, or King John, or king anybody else told me to make war in France, so that wars be made?"

"It signifies to you, my friend," replied the count, "for it makes you a lawful soldier or a lawless plunderer: it renders you an honourable prisoner or a captured robber, and ensures your safety or leads you to a halter."

"Good faith, then," cried the man, "I fancy it must be the halter; for I made war of my own hand, knowing what I was about, and so am quite ready. However, no one can say I have used him ill. I have never butchered a prisoner, or injured a woman, or offered wrong to a lady; and, had it been my day to command, all this would not have happened."

"My noble lord," said Albert Denyn, taking a step forward, with his countenance glowing at the task of interfering with his lord's judgment, "when I was a prisoner in these men's hands, and the scoundrel Maillot sought to put me to death, this person raised his voice in my behalf, and aided to save me."

"So, my boy, thou wert a prisoner with them," said the count; "well, then, his life shall be given for yours. Set him apart, Magnon."

"Not without the rest!" cried the captive. "All fair, my good lord! I drew my lot with them, and their fate I will share, be it what it may. I thank thee, good youth: thou art a noble lad, and wilt be a good soldier; but I wo'n't part company with my friends here, though it be at the gallows-foot."

"Thou art a good fellow thyself," exclaimed the capital. "I pray you, count, spare these men. I vowed I would have vengeance for any wrong done to the lady, and the man who, it seems, was the chief offender, has met with punishment, as you know. Speak, dear lady, did you receive any injury?"

"None!" replied Adela, eagerly. "They treated me, my dear father, with all kindness and courtesy till the castle was attacked, and that fearful man came and dragged me to the battlements. Spare them—oh! I entreat you, my father, put them not to death! Consider how cruelly they might have used me had they been so disposed."

"Nay, nay, my lord," said the captal, "let us show mercy to those that remain. Some seventy have been slain, it seems; and as I know that it is your wish to free Touraine from these plunderers, keep them in prison, or let those who will take service in my band; for I am bound upon a long journey in arms, and need tried men. Come, my dear lord, for my share in this day's fight you shall give me the guerdon of the prisoners' lives."

"I give them to you willingly, Lord Captal," cried the count, turning and grasping his hand, "not as your guerdon for such high deeds as you have done this day, but out of love and friendship for so noble a knight. For your aid I have a better recompense. Let the hall be cleared! Stay, Albert—stay, Chassain—and you too, Delbas; let the rest leave us."

The cheek of Adela grew as pale as death with a presentiment of the coming of a painful moment. Albert Denyn, with a quivering lip, fixed his eyes upon the ground, scarcely daring to raise them, while the receding feet of the soldiery told that the hall was not yet clear. When all was becoming more still, however, he gave a momentary glance at the face of the captal. It too was pale; and, as he laid aside his casque, and pressed his hand upon his brow, Albert thought he saw tokens of strong emotion on that noble countenance.

"My dear and gallant friend," said the count, turning to the knight as soon as the hall was clear, "to you, and to your courage alone, do I owe the safety of my beloved child, without the loss of my own honour and renown, by basely yielding to the demands of these lawless men. What reward can I offer you? what, in other words, can I refuse you after this? Forget, my Lord Captal, all that passed two mornings ago, except that you asked my daughter's hand, and believe that I then gave it to you. Take it, my lord, for I know no man in France so well calculated to defend, protect, and ensure her honour. Take her, my lord, for I am sure that you will make her happy."

Adela's countenance was as pale as death, and her knees shook beneath her. Albert Denyn remained with his teeth hard set, his eyes fixed upon the pavement, and his hand so tightly clinched upon the count's sword, which he had raised from the ground and still held, that the fingers sank into the velvet with which the hilt was covered. The Captal de Buch, on his part, looked grave,

and even sad, though he stood beside the count with his lofty person raised to its full height, and his brow calm, though somewhat stern. For a moment he kept silence, bending his look upon Adela, and seeming to strive for an insight into the feelings of her heart at that moment. He remained without making any reply so long, that the count turned towards him with some surprise; and the captal, as if satisfied in regard to the subject of his contemplation, took his eyes from the countenance of poor Adela de Mauvinet, and raised them for an instant towards heaven.

"Pardon, my lord count," he said, "that I have not yet thanked you for your generous kindness as I ought. Now let me thank you most truly, most sincerely: you know that the precious gift you offer me can be esteemed by no man living more than myself. You know how ardently I coveted it—how earnestly I asked it—how bitter was my disappointment when you showed me that I ought not to expect it; that as an English subject, and long an enemy in arms against France, I ought not to aspire to the hand of a French lady, whatever other claims I might have. I have felt the disappointment most bitterly; I feel it still: I still love this lady truly and well; I know that none other will ever hold my heart as she does. But, my lord, I cannot take advantage of your generous offer; and what you refused me on just and noble grounds, I cannot now accept, simply because I have done my mere duty, and fulfilled my oath as a knight."

The count gazed in his face for a moment with a look both of inquiry and surprise, and then replied abruptly, "Captal, there is some other motive! Can it be that you are offended at my first reply?"

"Oh no, upon my life," exclaimed the captal: "you gave the noblest and the best reasons for your conduct, and I should be weak indeed, my friend, if I did not feel that you are right."

"Still, captal," exclaimed the count, "still I see there is some other motive: I adjure you, on your honour, tell me, is there not?"

The captal turned his eyes from the deathlike countenance of Adela to the sad but resolute countenance of Albert Denyn, and then replied, "Thus adjured, my lord, I must acknowledge that there is."

"Then I beseech you, in friendship and in honour, name it," exclaimed the count.

The captal hesitated for an instant, but the moment after answered in a freer tone than he had yet used, though with a somewhat melancholy smile, "I will not refuse to tell you my motive, my good lord," he said, "although it go somewhat against my own vanity to speak it. The cause is this, my lord: that, with all the attention, and care, and such means as gentlemen employ to win fair ladies' hearts, I have not succeeded in gaining that of this dear lady here. I had hoped that it might be otherwise; but, from what I have this day seen—nay, this very moment—I am convinced, even against all the whisperings of pride and vanity, that my suit is not successful with her whose happiness I am bound to prize even more than my own."

"Nay, nay," exclaimed the count, "you are mistaken, my good lord: Adela turned somewhat pale, it is true; but think what she has gone through this day! Besides, so young a creature hears not such things without emotion. Speak, Adela, speak thyself; and if, as is the way with woman, you will not say that you can love, tell the noble captal, at least, that it was but a passing beating of thy heart that took the colour from thy face just now."

"I dare not, my dear father," replied the lady, in tones scarcely audible, "I dare not. Far be it from me to resist your will, or to oppose your wishes even by a word; but still, when you ask me, I must speak the truth. The captal has read my feelings right. As the dearest, the noblest, the best of friends, I shall always regard him, but I cannot love him as he deserves to be loved."

"Such love will come, such love will come," exclaimed the count.

"Nay, nay, my good lord," said the captal, "my pride now takes arms: I must be loved entirely by my wife—and henceforth I withdraw my suit. Pardon me, lady, if I have given you pain; and let me still assure you, that if ever the time should come, which God forbid, when you should want protection from another arm than that of your noble father, no knight in Europe will so willingly draw the sword in your defence as he who has done so this day. To-morrow, God willing, he will leave the castle of Mauvinet, and try in other lands to forget, not that he has seen you—not that he has loved—but that he has ever loved you too well for his own

happiness. Do you forget it likewise for the few short hours that he has yet to stay. Look on him only as a valued friend who is soon to quit you, and so let the time pass as gayly as it may."

The Count de Mauvinet turned and grasped the capital's hand with a look in which there was some sorrow mixed strangely with other feelings. To unite his daughter with the capital, or, indeed, with any one who could ever become an enemy to France, was in itself painful to him, however much he might love and esteem the person; and though, in his gratitude for the rescue of his daughter, he had offered, and really wished, to give that which, in his eyes, was the best gift that man could bestow or could receive, there was a sensation of relief mingled with a certain sort of disappointment, which rendered his feelings somewhat strange and contradictory.

"Then, my lord," he said, "as you refuse the gift I offer you, what recompense can I make you? for some token of gratitude you must accept. To you, and you alone, I owe the safety of my beloved child: that deed must not go without its guerdon."

"Nay, count," replied the capital, "you mistake: it is not to me you owe the lady's safety. Though I have had some share, others have had a greater; and, indeed, to this good youth here, Albert Denyn, are you truly indebted for the deliverance of your daughter, without that compromise of your own honour which you would have felt and regretted for many a long day if you had yielded to the unjust demands of these base men. To him, I say, more than to any other, is the safety of the Lady Adela owing."

"Oh yes," exclaimed Adela, eagerly, but with a countenance into which the blood came quickly while she spoke. "He would have freed me long before, too, had it not been for my own weak fears in regard to crossing the moat, over which he offered to carry me."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the count: "I do not understand this, capital! I saw you with my own eyes—"

"True, my lord," replied the capital; "but who was it led me by the path which enabled me to free the lady? But my part of the tale is soon told; Albert himself must relate to you the rest. While lying out in the fields this morning with my men, two of them suddenly came upon some one, whom they seized, thinking him

one of the companions from the castle, and brought him to me. His joy at finding me I shall not easily forget. He pressed me eagerly to go at once to the deliverance of the Lady Adela, assuring me that he could guide me by a way which would put the castle in my power without delay. From the numbers, however, that I found were within the place, I judged that we might risk the safety of the Lady Adela herself if we ventured to attack the castle without your aid. Resolved, however, to have the honour of the enterprise as far as possible, I kept to myself the knowledge I had gained, sent on Albert with some of my men to wait till the whole forces of Mauvinet could come up, and then left you, as you know, to assail another side of the castle. Albert led us, without mistake, to the spot where a small postern gate opened upon the moat; and he was the first to plunge into the water, under the arrows of those who were upon the walls. We followed, one by one, and through dark and difficult passages he guided us with certainty to a chamber which had lately been tenanted by the Lady Adela. She was no longer in it, however, having been dragged by that villain Maillot to the walls; but we found a poor woman there in her place, who first, by her cries, alarmed some of the adventurers, but afterward did us good service, by telling us where we should find the lady, and leading us partly on the way. We were soon obliged to betake us to our arms; for the woman's cries had brought men into the corridor, and thence we had to fight our way through, till we reached the gallery above the gates. What happened then, my lord, you know; at least, as I saw you all gazing up while the wolf continued to struggle in my grasp, I doubt not that you did see all that passed. What more remains to be said, my noble lord, is merely that, from the first, Albert led us well and truly; and also, when the strife came, he fought as gallantly as any man-at-arms I ever saw. So much so, in truth, and so well had he deserved, that for a moment I thought to leave him the whole adventure, and suffer him to deal with Maillot himself. Had the lady not been in danger, I would have done so; for I hold it to be the part of a man of honour to suffer every one to accomplish an enterprise he has well begun. The lady was in peril, however, and I durst not do the good youth that justice. To say truth, I am glad now I did not; for the scoundrel

was strong and valiant, and even gave me some trouble ; and his well-knit limbs and long experience were too much for a youth, however brave. My tale is told, my lord : Albert and the lady herself have more to say ; for, by some means, he found his way to the chamber where they had placed her before making his escape, and offered even then, with every likelihood of success, to set her free himself."

The count held out his hand to Albert Denyn, saying, "How then shall I reward *you*, Albert? You lay up against me every day some heavy debt for gratitude to pay."

"Oh no, my lord," replied Albert Denyn, "it is not so, indeed. I feel most deeply that all I can do is but little to show my thankfulness for all that you have done for me. Do I not owe you everything, my lord? From a period of infancy that I can no more recollect, have you not been all in all to me—more a father than a lord ; a friend and not a master?"

"And well have you repaid me ever," replied the Lord of Mauvinet, "and daily do you repay me more and more for all that I have done ; but for such services as this, any little kindness and favour that I may have shown you is little, and I must find some other means of recompensing the deliverance of my beloved child. You shall ask me some boon yourself when you have had time for thought ; and I believe that it will be difficult for you to claim anything which I should be tempted to refuse."

As the count spoke, the Captal de Buch turned his keen glance towards Adela, whose countenance, when first his eyes rested on her, was pale with various emotions ; but the moment her look met his, her face became flushed like the morning sky, and her eyes, which had been for some time turned to the face of her father, sought the ground, and were not raised again.

The captal mused for a moment with a brow slightly clouded ; but the moment after he smiled again, saying, "You have a long tale to hear, my lord. The Lady Adela, too, may well be faint and weary : let us prepare a litter for her as best we may, and all return to Mauvinet ere the day goes down. The sun has already passed the hour of noon, though we were here at the dawning. Albert's history will cheer us over the fire to-night ; and I will gladly spend the last day of my stay

in Touraine within the hospitable walls where I have known no slight happiness."

"Be it so, my good lord, be it so," replied the count: "but let us seek some refreshment first; we are sure to find plenty of good wine and stores of all kinds in a free companion's castle. In the mean while, some of the men shall prepare the litter; and I will take such order here as to prevent this place ever becoming again a scourge to the country round."

An hour of active employment succeeded, although, a conveyance for Adela having been found in the stables of the castle, less time would have sufficed for mere preparation. But the men of Mauvinet, although they had undertaken all the labour and peril of the expedition with willing hearts, in order to deliver their lord's daughter, and revenge the insult offered to himself, were well disposed to seek some compensation for all the fatigue and danger they had undergone in the stores of the adventurers; and it was consequently with some trouble and delay that they were gathered together to depart. The Lord of Mauvinet, too, took means to execute his purpose in regard to dismantling the castle; and just as he and the capital were mounting their horses to ride away, the last touch was put to their triumph by the fall of a large part of the castle wall into the moat.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

Those were strange times to live in; and although human nature is ever the same, yet the aspect which she assumes is very different at different periods. In the present day, when order and law, established throughout all civilized lands, give security to life and property, when violence and wrong are among those rare occurrences which excite the wonder of the countries where they take place, it is difficult to conceive how lightly were borne, even by those who suffered from them, deeds which now would set a whole world on fire, and spread terror and consternation through all hearts; how soon after the pressure of affliction and terror the mind recovered its elasticity, and gayety and joy succeeded to sadness, to anger, or to apprehension.

Thus any who had beheld the scenes, such as we have described them, which took place in the morning, during the attack upon the stronghold of the adventurers, might have been much surprised to behold the picture presented by the castle of Mauvinet on the evening of the same day. Mirth and joy reigned in the halls, and feasting and revelry presented themselves on all sides.

The retainers who had been gathered together for the delivery of the Lady Adela were now all regaled by the hospitality of her father; and though the sun was setting when the train, after a long and fatiguing march, once more came within sight of Mauvinet, yet before nine o'clock on the same night a supper had been prepared, which all those who partook of it declared to be excellent. Such was the continual state of preparation for profuse hospitality in which a feudal lord of those days was bound to hold himself, and such, we may also say, were the simple tastes and good digestion of our ancestors of the fourteenth century.

It was, of course, impossible that the whole of the men who had followed the Lord of Mauvinet back to his dwelling could be entertained in one chamber. Though many had returned to their homes, and a considerable body had been left in the hold of the adventurers, nearly two hundred were feasted in various rooms on the ground-floor of the castle, while about half that number revelled in what was called the knights' hall. It was common in those days for all ranks to be mingled at one table on such occasions; but in the present case, the numbers gave an excuse for a different and more convenient course. Beyond the knights' hall was a smaller one, where a table was spread for the count, the capital, and some twenty of the most distinguished guests; and at that table appeared, sitting by her father's side, Adela herself, pale, indeed, and bearing many marks of past agitation and alarm, but yet far more calm and tranquil than any one could have been whose thoughts had not been like hers—familiar, all her life, with battles, dangers, and disasters.

Ere she seated herself at her father's board, she had performed a task which her own heart, not less than the customs of the times, imposed upon her; and with grace, which mingled timidity and self-possession, she went round from room to room, spoke with most of

those who were present, and offered, in few but heartfelt words, her thanks for the deliverance to which all had more or less contributed.

At the same table with the count was also seated Albert Denyn, who, in truth, had proposed to himself to take a much more humble situation in one of the other chambers; but the count had called him to his side, bidding him seat himself in a place which had been reserved for him, and the youth, without hesitation, obeyed, as he would any other order of his lord.

The captal looked down while the command was given, and asked himself, in a low tone, as Albert took his seat, "What will be the end, I wonder?" A slight frown contracted his countenance, too, as he thus thought; and, to say truth, there was some bitterness in the feelings of his bosom at that moment. But his heart was naturally too generous and kind to suffer such sensations to hold it long; and the instant after he added, "Well, let honour and great deeds still have their due," and he looked up with his face bright and clear again.

Not long after the meal had begun, the count drank to the captal, and sent round to him, by the hands of his son—who served him with wine at the table, as was customary in those times—the large golden cup called the *hanap*. The captal drank some of the wine, and then, turning towards Albert Denyn, said, "To the best doer in this day's fight! It is not always, young man, that fortune shows such favour as she has done to you this day. She has given you opportunities such as many men long for in vain during a whole lifetime, and, to do you but justice, you have shown that you deserved them. Take him round the cup, good youth."

The young lord carried him the cup, and Albert Denyn took it with a glowing cheek, bowing his head towards the captal, but scarcely touching the gold with his lip ere he returned it. The eyes of all men were upon him at that moment; but, had they been turned towards Adela, they might have perceived that hers were filled with glistening moisture. The poor girl would fain have restrained the bright drop altogether, but she could do no more than prevent its passing from her eyelids.

The tone of her mind was much changed from what it had been in the morning. Great occasions excite

great energies ; but, after the dangers, and strifes, and anxieties have passed away, there comes a softness over the heart, a faint tranquillity, like the drowsiness succeeding long toil, when the vigour is relaxed, and tender things affect us more than all the harder and the harsher matters gone before. It was one of those moments with Adela when she longed to have no eyes upon her, but to sit in the solitude of her own chamber, and let the tears flow as they would.

The tears, however, which came against her will to the very brink of the fountain, were not unhappy ones : a load had been taken off her mind by more than one event which had occurred in the morning. She had no longer to fear the suit of the capital ; she had no longer to apprehend that she would be obliged either to excite her father's anger by disobedience and opposition to his will, or doom herself to the long and agonizing torture of marriage without love. She had obtained what she could scarcely have hoped to obtain—the opportunity of speaking openly a part, at least, of the feelings of her heart. Nor had her father expressed the least anger at the conduct she had pursued. He had sought her in her chamber to bring her to the hall, and Adela had felt some apprehension when she saw him appear ; but his countenance wore the same look of affection that it had ever borne towards her, and the capital's name was never mentioned. Thus on all those points she was fully satisfied, and her heart was at rest. The immediate danger was gone, and the apprehensions which had weighed her heart down for some days had passed away, like one of those heavy clouds that are borne afar by the wind at the moment they seem about to burst upon our heads. This was quite sufficient for Adela ; indeed, few women require more under similar circumstances. She sought not to investigate deeply her own feelings ; she would not ask herself what they were, or whither they would lead her ; she was afraid, and unwilling, to inquire into the future ; and, happy in the present, she sat, and only feared that the bright dream which surrounded her might vanish but too soon.

Such, however, was not the state of mind of Albert Denyn : he had been agitated by manifold feelings during the whole day, in the fight, on his way back, and after his return ; and seldom, indeed, in the breast of any one, have more contending emotions struggled at

one time, or succeeded each other so rapidly. Terror and agitation on account of Adela had begun the morning; then came joy for her deliverance, almost hand in hand with all the fierce and angry passions excited in the struggle with the adventurers; a moment after, the delight of seeing her safe was mingled with grief and apprehension when her father offered her hand to the Capal de Buch; and such sensations gave way to a feeling of relief and gratitude when the words of the capital removed that source of anxiety forever.

On his return home he had hastened to a chamber where he could be alone; and, in thanking God for all the successes of the day, he had mingled tears with the words of gratitude. But he, unlike Adela, was not satisfied with the present: he asked himself what the future was to be. Unlike her, he inquired of his own heart to what the feelings which were so busy in his bosom were ultimately to lead, and the momentary light which had streamed over the prospect passed away as his eyes gazed upon it firmly.

There was nothing but misery before him. Though the sorrow was delayed, yet it was no less certain. Though the hand of Adela was not yet given, it was equally sure to be bestowed on some one ere long; on some one, perhaps, less worthy than the noble and generous man who had now renounced it. For him there was no expectation; for him the prospect of the coming years was all darkness; and the speedy separation which was to take place between them did not even leave him the only mitigation which the hopelessness of his condition might have received—the delight of passing the intervening hours with her, till the bitter moment arrived which was to part them forever.

As he thus thought—and it must always be remembered that Albert Denyn never thought but with the purposes of right—he asked himself what consolation it would be, or, rather, what advantage could arise, from his remaining where he was, even were it possible: to what could it bring him? he inquired; what could be the result, either to himself or to Adela?

He felt, he knew that he was loved: it might be some temporary satisfaction to her as well as him were he to remain; but what would be the end? what could be the ultimate consequence? what, but more misery to her and to himself? Could he—he asked himself—could he

assure his own heart that the time would never come when, in some unforeseen moment—when, in some hour of strong temptation, his love might be spoken to Adela, and hers to him; when words might be said which he had no right to say; when feelings might find voice which he had no right to entertain; and when he might violate the confidence reposed in him, and have to reproach himself forever with having voluntarily, by his own rash act, contributed to confirm a passion which he was bound by every principle of honour to combat? He felt that it was but too likely that such a thing might happen, that such a moment might come: he acknowledged that both for Adela and himself it would be better that he were afar.

When once he saw what was the clear way of duty, Albert bent all the energies of his mind to follow it without hesitation; and, instead of regretting the near approach of the time when his departure was to take place, he thanked God that it was so, and looked forward to the moment with satisfaction.

"It is better," he said to himself, "it is far better that it should be so: despair is my only portion through life; but she cannot love me as well as I love her—that is impossible; and there is no reason why she should not be happy. She may forget me when I am gone, but I can never forget her; and my love for her must teach me to think of her happiness more than my own. I will love her as she deserves to be loved, nobly."

Still, though such were his resolutions, they were not the less painful, and it had been with feelings of deep gloom that he descended to the hall. The honour that was there done him in no degree diminished that gloom: it was gratifying, indeed, to hear such praises, though he thought them more than he deserved; and it was pleasant, too, that Adela should hear them, for he knew that they would be echoed from her own heart; but still they gave him no hope; for he was well aware that, except in cases where poverty was the portion of the noble, and great wealth that of the inferior rank, the union of a lady of high degree with any one less than noble had never been heard of in the land.

"Such a vision would be vain indeed," he thought, "and is not for me to indulge. My path is clear, my duty unquestionable, and it I will perform, let it cost me what it may."

He was sooner tried than he expected. The evening passed away at length, and Albert cast himself down to seek some troubled sleep; but it came not for many hours; and when it did come, it was full of restless and confused visions till within a few hours of the dawn. Then, indeed, he slept, and was still deep in slumber when some one woke him, and called him to the chamber of the Captal de Buch. Albert rose and dressed himself hastily, somewhat ashamed to see the morning so far advanced.

The captal, when the young man at length reached his chamber, appeared to have been long up. He was seated at a table reading, with a countenance grave and somewhat sad; it might, indeed, be called stern; for in his bosom there were feelings which he struggled to restrain, and he felt as if he were in combat with an enemy, so that his brow bore upon it strong signs of the contest in which he was engaged.

"You sleep late, young man," he said, when Albert entered.

"It is not my habit, my lord," replied Albert; "but I was much fatigued last night; too much, indeed, to sleep till it was time to rise."

The captal looked down for several moments in silence. "I sent for you," he said at length, "because, as you know, it is my purpose to go hence this day. Since first you entered into my band, as it seemed at the time gladly, you have had means of serving your own lord so well, that circumstances are greatly changed; and perhaps it may please you more to remain here, now that an honourable station is before you, than to accompany me to a distant land. Should it be so, I set you free: nay, more, I will do what I can to advance you."

"A thousand thanks, my noble lord," replied Albert Denyn; "but you much mistake me if you think that aught can alter my purpose of seeking honour and renown in arms. I know nowhere where I can so well find it as in your steps; and, unless I have done something to offend, I beseech you let me follow you, as you once promised me."

"Is such indeed your wish?" demanded the captal, with a look still incredulous. "Mark me, youth: fear not to displease either me or your good Lord of Mauvinet. If you desire rather to stay than go, I will so speak unto that noble gentleman that the proposal shall

come from him and not from you, and doubtless he will promote your fortunes here."

"I see, my lord, I must have offended," replied Albert; "but, believe me, it has been unwittingly."

"No, on my honour," replied the captal, with a smile, "I have taken no offence. I thought but to please thee, youth. However, if thou wilt go, now is the time to say so."

"Undoubtedly, my lord," replied Albert: "my choice has never been shaken. If you permit it, I will go with you, and am ready this very hour."

"So be it, then," replied the captal; "and perchance it may go better with thee than if thou hadst stayed behind."

"I doubt it not, my lord," replied Albert: "though it may give me some pain to part with many an old friend, and many a scene where I have spent happy hours, yet I am sure that in going I do what is right, and will therefore cast behind me all regrets."

"So shall you ever do well," replied the captal. "At three this afternoon we will begin our march, and enter Mans by moonlight. You have arms, I know: here is a purse of gold for thee, good youth; you may find it needful on the road."

"I would fain win it first," replied Albert, drawing back. "My Lord of Mauvinet has supplied me plentifully; and wealth and renown are both sweetest when first earned. I have a noble horse, too, my good lord; so that I need nothing but your and fortune's favour, good opportunity, and a somewhat lighter heart."

"Fy, lad!" replied the captal, with a faint smile, "you would not have a lighter heart than your lord's? and yet you have good cause," he added; "but it matters not: get you gone, and be ready when my trumpets sound. You shall win honour and renown, which, after all, are better than all on earth—ay, youth, even than a lady's favour! So now away; make the most of your minutes; bid adieu to your friends, and give as little time to thought as may be; for thought loads the heart, and does but little good when resolutions are once taken."

Albert withdrew, for the captal bent down his eyes upon his book again as a signal for him to withdraw; but, as Albert passed through the doorway, he saw the gallant soldier raise his look towards the sky, and, had he been near, might have heard him say, "This is very strange!"

Every one must have felt and acknowledged, at some period of life, that there are few things bitterer on earth than to part with those we love; but that bitterness is a thousand-fold increased when no tear must stain the eyelid, when no sigh must pass the lip, when we must speak hopeful words of future meetings, and seem to break easily the ties that tear our hearts to sever. Then, indeed, the pain is terrible; then, indeed, the grief is deep. There were few pangs wanting in the breast of Albert Denyn when the trumpets of the capital sounded to horse, and the whole party assembled in the courtyard of the castle to see the gallant train depart. The youth had not ventured within the halls, but stood with the rest of the retainers till the capital himself, with the Lord of Mauvinet, came forth into the court. Adela accompanied them, leaning on her father's arm; and as the great leader stood beside his horse, she forced herself to speak words of courtesy and of form to the departing nobleman, although her heart was full of tears, and her cheek was as pale as death. She looked towards Albert Denyn, but durst not speak to him, till at length her father called him by name, and the youth came near.

"Adieu, Albert," said the Lord of Mauvinet. "You go to win honour and renown: I may say, indeed, that you have already won them; but glory may still be added to each day. Fare you well, my boy; I part from you, as from a son, with regret, but with hope and expectation. Do ever such deeds as you have lately done, and you will rise to high fortunes and win an immortal name. Give me your hand, Albert: I owe you more than I owe any other man on earth. The time of repayment will sooner or later come, and you shall ever find me both ready and willing to acknowledge the debt and to acquit it." Albert pressed his lips upon his lord's hand, and the count, yielding to the feelings of his heart, took him in his arms, and held him kindly to his bosom.

"Thank him, Adela," added the Lord of Mauvinet, after a moment's silence: "in your behalf have his first deeds been done: give him your cheek, girl, and bid him win high renown for your love."

The Lord of Mauvinet spoke in jest, though in the very jest itself there might be deeper thoughts than there seemed; but he little knew what were the sensations he excited in the hearts of Adela and Albert Denyn. She

trembled in every limb as the youth approached her; but Albert, with a calm and steady step, though with feelings as intense as her own, advanced and took her hand, and then, according to her father's words, pressed his lips upon her cheek.

"The first," murmured he, as he did so, in a voice inaudible to any other ear but her own; "the first, perchance the last."

Even as he spoke he bent his knee to the ground, and, taking her hand in his, imprinted a kiss there also; then springing up with wild eagerness, he turned towards his horse, bowing low to the count as he passed, and put his foot into the stirrup. The capta<sup>l</sup> waved his hand to the trumpeter of his troop, a loud blast echoed upon the air, and in a moment the whole troop was in motion, and winding out through the gates of the castle.

The last who departed was the capta<sup>l</sup>; and, as he disappeared beneath the portal of the barbican, the count turned round, startled by a sound of quick feet behind him, when, to his surprise and alarm, he beheld his daughter, supported by some of her women, with her eyes closed, and the ashy hue of death upon her cheek.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

A loud shout of laughter was the first thing that roused Albert Denyn from a state of mind for which it is difficult to find a name. It was not a revery, for thought seemed quite extinguished, and recollection to have left him so long as it lasted. It was as if all had gone out, even the active consciousness that he had parted, perhaps forever, from her he loved best. All appeared to be swallowed up in one painful sensation, vague, sad, ill-defined, but not the less terrible, because the dark certainty seemed to have neither shape nor feature.

The first thing that roused him, I have said, was a gay laugh; and, looking round, he found that he himself was the object of the mirth that met his ear. He might perhaps have been angry had he not been so sad; but the bitterness of his heart left no room for other sensations, and he fell into his revery again, though somewhat less

profoundly than before. Had he been angry, his anger would but have raised more laughter. As it was, however, the calm, sad look which he turned upon his merry companions had some effect even upon them, though they were men, for the most part, who had seen so many scenes of strife and desolation, that their hearts had become, as it were, hardened in the furnace of war, and they had little capability of feeling any of the softer affections of human nature.

"There, let him alone, let him alone," said one of the old soldiers: "he is a moody youth: did you not see how he kept apart from us all in the castle?"

"Pride as well as melancholy, perhaps," said another.

"No, no," replied a younger man: "old Henry the henchman told me that he used to be as gay as a lark, but had fallen gloomy lately."

"In love, for a thousand ~~reasons~~,"\* said another youth.

"Love!" exclaimed the old soldier, again: "you young fools are always thinking of love. I will bet you, Tom Wilson, that if your mother's cat were sick of a quinsy, you would vow it was love."

"All envy, old Raymond," replied the youth, in a gay tone: "you know very little of what love is, seeing that you find few enough to fall in love with you. You want experience, man, you want experience! Now will I bet you a crown that the youth is in love, and I will ask him, too, ere the day be over."

"He will give thee a buffet, I warrant," answered the elder man, "and so will I, if thou holdest not thy prate. But what is this our lord is speaking to? By heaven, he seems to have got hold of a tame bear! Halt, there! halt! The word is given to halt! Now I would give a gold chain to ride on and hear the bear speak, and the cap'tal answer him."

"Why, our moody comrade seems resolved to do so," said another. "See! he sets spurs to his horse, and is up at the cap'tal's side in a minute. By my life, he is somewhat bold."

"Do as good service as he did yesterday," replied another, "and be as bold, if you will."

It was, in truth, as the man had said; for Albert Delyn had galloped forward suddenly to the side of the cap'tal, on seeing him pause and speak to an uncouth-looking being clad in goatskins, who thrust himself

\* A gold coin of that day.

right in the way of the leader's horse. The capital's followers were naturally surprised at what seemed an act of great presumption; but such will not be the case with the reader, who must have perceived that the youth recognised at once, in the personage who stopped the capital, his companion in the prison of the adventurers, to whom, indeed, he owed so much.

The capital was speaking with the old man, as we have said, when the youth came up, and continued his conversation without observing him, saying,

"By my faith, I will go on! They shall not turn me from my way."

"As thou wilt," replied the other, "as thou wilt, knight; nevertheless, I have told thee truth, and that thou wilt find right soon."

"How many, say you?" demanded the capital.

"Full five hundred," replied the old man; "well armed, prepared, and eager."

"That is too great an odds, indeed," said the Capital de Buch, after thinking for a moment; "but how can I make sure of this? You are a stranger to me, old man: it may be a falsehood or a folly. How shall I know the truth?"

"You may rely in all confidence, my lord," exclaimed Albert: "this is the man I mentioned to you, who, in fact, set me free when I was a prisoner in the hands of the adventurers. I would trust him, my lord, on my life."

"Ay," replied Walleran, "thou art young, and in the age of confidence. Your leader has learned better in a harder school than thou hast ever known. Past thirty years, man can trust no longer; the first thing that youth loses is its faith in human truth."

"Nay," exclaimed the capital, "nay, thou shalt not say so of me. I will trust thee too, old man: I have no right so to complain of man. Though I have seen much deceit, I have felt it little, and therefore cannot claim so sad a right to doubt. I will trust thee. Where say you that they lie in wait?"

"On the straight road between this and Mans: come but to the top of yon high hill, and you may see them, or at least a part."

"We must not show ourselves," replied the capital; "we will leave the troop here, but I will go with you: not that I doubt your word, but that I may count our ad-

venturous friends with my own eyes. It must never be said the Captal de Buch turned back before a force less than six times his numbers."

"Be thy reputation as mad as it will," replied the old man, "here shall you find enough to satisfy it; for there are not only six, but twelve times your number. But come you too, good youth," he added, "for I have something to claim from this great man, and may need some intercession."

The captal smiled. "Come," he said, "Albert, come, I too may need you. You know the country well, I think. Halt, there," he continued, speaking to those who followed; and then riding slowly on, he proceeded up the hill, conversing with the old man and Albert Denyn. The latter soon found that Walleran Urgel had brought tidings of a large band of the adventurers—in number, it seemed, some five hundred—having posted themselves upon the road to Mans, as if seeking to intercept the captal on his way. His proposed journey had been made no secret; the part he had taken against the free companions had been conspicuous, the money he bore with him was necessarily considerable, and both revenge and avarice might well induce the adventurers to lay an ambush in his way. From time to time, as he rode forward, the captal turned his eyes upon Albert Denyn, as-if seeking to read his young companion's feelings on this new danger. He could gather little, however, from the youth's countenance, which was quite calm; and when he had reached the summit of the hill, he demanded,

"Well, Albert, what think you: should we turn back to Mauvinet?"

"Nay, my lord," said Albert Denyn, "I am unfit to give advice; but to turn back, methinks, would ill become one of the most renowned soldiers in the land."

The captal only answered by a smile, and in a moment or two after they reached a spot whence they could descry, at the distance of about a couple of miles, a considerable body of men gathered together in a hollow way.

The captal gazed forth in silence for a moment or two, and then, speaking to himself, he said, "About two hundred."

"There are more beyond," said the old man.

"I see them," answered the captal, calmly; "but, as

nothing more than their spearheads appear, we cannot count them, my good friend. Doubtless, however, their numbers are what you say; and as these free companions under Griffith are soldiers not to be despised, it would be something very like madness to attack five hundred with somewhat under fifty men."

"Methinks it were," replied the old man, in his usual sarcastic tone; "but, as no one can tell to what length knightly folly will sometimes lead, it is only for you to decide, most noble captal, whether your high renown requires of you to fall into certain captivity or death rather than turn back upon your way."

"My lord," said Albert, seeing the captal pause, "I know not why you should either attack these men or return to Mauvinet. There is a road, scarce a mile round, which leads as well to where you seek to go as that which these men have thus occupied. I can guide you by it well, for I have known every step thereof from my youth. On the whole ride, from this spot till within two miles of Mans, you come not within sight of that valley."

"Such must be the road we take, then," replied the captal; "for back I go not, let what will come of it. Now let us see your skill, good youth, as guide to a retreating force. And you, old man, what shall we do with you or for you? Have you no boon to ask for this good intelligence that you have brought us?"

"Yes," answered the old man, "I have; it is, that you take me with you on your way: this part of the land is no longer safe for me, and I seek not to remain in it. Though I value not life, yet there is one act I would fain see performed before I go on the long journey from which one can never return to witness what passes on this earth."

"I know not well how that may be," replied the captal, gazing over the strange figure of the man who addressed him: "your information is worth its price, good friend, but I see not well how the price can be so large a one. We are going far; when we return, Heaven knows! and I seek not fresh companions on my expedition."

"You would say," replied the old man, "that your eye takes offence at these goatskins: is it not so? That can soon be changed, however. Captal de Buch, I have done you a service: you are held honest and honourea-

ble, as the world goes : I ask you but one boon, and will take no other ; give it or refuse it, as you think fit, and as you judge your name requires. A few short minutes would have brought you into the ambush of these men : through me you have found safety : will you take me with you ?”

“ I do beseech you, my lord,” said Albert Denyn, “ this man did so much to befriend me when I stood in need of help, and he so much aided in our yesterday’s success, that I beseech you refuse him not. I have enough to purchase him a horse wherever we shall halt, and till then there are several in the rear.”

“ I will not refuse him,” replied the capital, “ though, to speak truth, what he has said is true : I covet not much his goatskins in my train.”

“ They shall soon be changed,” exclaimed the old man ; “ for I well know that those who would willingly see a fool follow them with his cap and bells, would shun a wise man in a goatskin.”

“ That is very true,” replied the capital, laughing, “ and yet they themselves no blockheads either, my good friend. There are too many fools wherever we may go in this good world for us to be welcomed kindly for bringing a wise man, either in goatskins or not. However, you shall go with us, as far as you will ; into Prussia, if you like it, to fight against the Pagans.”

“ Not so,” the old man replied, “ not so, I would fain make my way into Normandy if you bend your steps thither ; if not, take me to the Beauvoisis, or as near it as may be.”

“ We pass through it,” replied the capital, “ but Normandy we shall not touch upon ; for there are many there who would fain engage me in other enterprises, which I must not undertake. I turn aside, then, from Mans, and make my way straight on to Beauvais, where one half of the ransom of this good Lord of Mauvinet is to be paid.”

“ Ha !” said the old man, “ is it as the price of blood or the price of liberty that you noble knights take ransoms ? A splendid way it is, in truth, of gaining money, giving up your own bodies to hard blows, cutting the throats of other people, or depriving them of God’s fair light and the liberty of their limbs, till they pay you a certain price for freedom.”

“ Not so,” answered the capital, with a smile, “ There

is no time to argue with you, my good man ; I follow the customs of the day in which I live. I risk my heart's blood in defence of a cause that I think righteous and just, and in the same cause I spend my wealth and employ my followers. It is but right that I should make an enemy repay me and reward my soldiery. But come, let us return ; we will find you a horse, so follow us. Come, Albert, come with me."

Thus saying, he turned and put his horse into a quicker pace. "Who is this old man?" he demanded, as soon as they were at a little distance: "his look and his words are far above his garb."

"I know not, truly, sir," replied the youth, "though he seems to know well who I am, and all about me. I found him contending with the villain Caillet in defence of the Lady Adela. He seemed to use his weapons skilfully ; but when I came up he left Caillet to me, as if in contempt. Afterward, when they thrust him into the prison where they kept me, he conversed with me long, and though what he said was not like that which is uttered by ordinary men, yet it was all good, and wise, and noble—at least, so it seemed to me."

"I will speak with him farther," said the captal. "See that he be well treated and gently used. Our soldiery is kind enough at heart, but somewhat rough withal. I leave him in your charge for the present, Albert, till we have passed by these good companions, who are lying in wait for us here. I must keep watch myself till the danger is gone by ; afterward, I will speak with him more at large."

The captal and the youth rode onward till they reached the spot where the knight's retainers had been left. Orders were then immediately given to provide a horse for Walleran Urgel ; and the captal, adding some directions to the principal soldiers in his band regarding the cautions to be taken till they had passed by the spot where danger lay, advanced a little on the road. The old man, in the mean time, had followed slowly down the hill, with his eyes bent upon the ground ; and manifold were the comments of the captal's band upon his person and clothing ; in the course of which, their leader himself was not entirely spared.

"We shall have a fine menagerie," said one, "before we get to the end of our journey: a tame bear and a dumb monkey make a hopeful beginning."

"The captal was always fond of wild beasts," said another; "but I thought it was more of lions than of apes."

"His tastes seem to have changed," rejoined the first.

"And not for the better," said a third.

While these jests were passing, however, the horse had been brought forward for Walleran Urgel, and he approached calmly and slowly to the side of the animal, which, like most of those in the captal's train, was full of fire and courage. The animal reared and plunged in the hands of the groom, and the men present laughed in anticipation of the figure which their new uncouth companion would make upon the fiery beast which he was about to mount. But, to the surprise of all, when he approached with a calm air and laid his hand upon the bridle, bidding the groom stand back, the charger ceased to plunge, stood still and calm, and the old man at a bound leaped into the saddle, while the animal seemed instantly to obey his will, as if feeling at once that he had met with a master.

The jests died away upon the lips, where they had been indulged somewhat too freely; and the old man would certainly have been treated with more respect on account of his display of horsemanship than all the wisdom in the world would have gained him, but at that moment the captal called him to his side, and added the name of Albert Denyn.

Both rode on at once, and Albert received orders to advance some twenty yards before the rest, and lead the way by the road which he had promised to show. The captal himself, having thus signified his change of purpose, followed slowly, conversing with the old man, while his troop came at some distance behind, enjoying their usual thoughtless merriment, and little heeding what the next moment might bring forth.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

WE must now turn for a moment or two to one whom we have not seen for a long time, but who is nevertheless a principal personage in the history which we have undertaken to recount. Passing over what immediately

followed the departure of Caillet from the castle of the adventurers, however, we will follow him on the very same road which was afterward taken by the Captal de Buch and Albert Denyn, though, luckily for him, they did not overtake him thereon.

It was on a dark autumnal night in that part of France known by the name of the Beauvoisis ; and a fair part of the land it is ; indeed, I know no sweeter scenes of what may be called home landscape than are presented from time to time during a summer ride through the neighbourhood of Clermont, Chantilly, &c. ; nor were there less of these in those days than at present, but rather, perhaps, more ; for the features of nature have remained the same, except that forests have been cut down, and free common land changed into cultivated fields ; and at that time, not only did the cottage and the church crown each rising bank as at present, but here and there the graceful towers and pinnacles of the feudal castle were seen raising their heads over the forest or topping the highest hills.

It was night, however, as we have said, and night without a star, so that the features of the scenery could not be at all discerned, when the tall, fine figure of William Caillet moved along through the paths of a forest not above a few miles from the little town of St. Leu. He seemed to tread those paths familiarly, and, indeed, it was so ; for among the scenes of the Beauvoisis, as the reader has been already told, he had been born and brought up ; although, for the last eight or nine years, since the Lord of Mauvinet had become seneschal of Touraine, he had lived with that nobleman near the banks of the Loire.

He was in paths, then, and among scenes that were familiar to him. Every object that he had seen during his day's journey had called up some recollection of his youth ; but how changed were all the feelings of his heart since he had quitted that province, as a youth of sixteen or seventeen years of age ! There is, perhaps, not one of the passions which tenant the bosom of man whose effects are more baneful than smothered ambition : it is like a viper in the heart, preying upon all that is good and noble within it, and tearing the breast in which it is confined, in its vain efforts to force its way forth and find a wider scope.

The serpent, indeed, is of many sorts ; but of all am-

bitions, that which is the most injurious to ourselves and others is the ambition which is founded upon vanity; and such was the passion in the heart of William Caillet. When he had gone forth from the Beauvoisis, though wayward, obstinate, and wild, there had been many a better trait observable in his character, many a nobler feeling existing in his heart. He had not only displayed talents of a high order, but graces which captivate so as to cause faults to be overlooked when they should be checked; and the worthy chaplain of the Count of Mauvinet had fancied that he could never do enough to praise and to encourage the exertions of the young serf. Thus a heart naturally disposed to vanity was soon possessed therewith as with a demon; and on its wings rose up the passion of ambition. He fancied that all ought to be open to him; all that was done for him seemed too little; the distinctions made in his favour were in his eyes too small, when compared with his estimate of his own genius and powers; and he became in the first instance eager to obtain more, and then discontented when his efforts so to do were not successful. Imagination but too often lends her aid to whatever passion of the heart is strongest; and as he walked in proud superiority among his fellows, he would often dream wild and extravagant dreams, even at a time when he was a mere youth, of what he might one day become, and how he would then demean himself. But as experience was added and years went on, he saw all the manifold difficulties that surrounded him, the innumerable obstacles that presented themselves to his ambition on every side. It was in vain that he looked for any path, however narrow and difficult, by which he might hope to climb the hill of fame, to open the course to glory and renown. None was to be seen: and the ambition which for years had been growing up in his breast, like an eagle bred in a cage, only felt the power of its full-grown wings to beat them against the bars. He asked himself, Why should this be? why men, far, far inferior to himself, should possess advantages which to him were denied? Why, by a mere accident of birth, they should have every gift and opportunity of fortune, and he have none? and every sensation that vanity and discontent united can produce now rose up to plague him.

It was long, however, very long, before he could per-

suade himself that some opportunity would not sooner or later be afforded him for raising himself by strenuous exertion to the height for which he fancied himself formed. Fancy ranged wild amid everything that was possible, while probability was left far behind. The example of Artevelde was unfortunately before his eyes, at a time when his mind was not sufficiently formed to enable him to see the difference between the brewer of Ghent and the French serf; and on that example he built up visions of power and might, which became, as it were, a part of his own mind. Those visions, too, arose at a period when new sensations enter into the human heart, and love claims his share, likewise, ere other passions can swallow up the whole. Dreams of tenderness then became mingled in the breast of Caillet with dreams of ambition; and Adela de Mauvinet, though then in extreme youth, formed part of all.

At first, his feelings of love were pure and high, in some respects not unlike those which we have depicted as existing in the bosom of Albert Denyn. But vanity was mingled with the whole. He had fancied that he would find means to make her proud of his affection; that he would raise himself to such a height that he could honour her rather than she honour him. But as such hopes began to disappear, coarser passions arose in the breast of William Caillet, and mingled themselves even with his love for Adela. He mixed with the peasantry in the neighbourhood, who were somewhat proud to be noticed by a favourite attendant of their lord. His fine person, too, and graceful carriage, were not lost upon the girls of the village or the farm; but a bad name began to follow him; the doors of many a dwelling were closed against him; and tales of betrayal, and seduction, and heartless licentiousness began to spread around.

In general, the injured, believing his favour with the count to be even greater than it really was, were afraid to complain; but, in one instance, a father, in despair, flew to the castle, and told his tale at once to the Lord of Mauvinet. The complainant was a man of the poorer class of peasantry, but of good repute, and honourable among his fellows; and the count had no hesitation as to the conduct he should pursue. He promised that the offender should be compelled to make the only reparation in his power, and unite his fate forever to her

whom he had dishonoured. Fortunately for Caillet, he was himself absent at the time; for his was a spirit not to yield tamely to such injunctions as those which the count had determined to lay upon him, and what might have been the result cannot be told.

He was at a distance, however, and the father remained at the castle, waiting for his return with some anxiety, although, in those days, the command of a feudal lord was not to be disobeyed; but, ere the youth returned, the decree of a more powerful lord had reversed that of the Count de Mauvinet. Despair and shame had driven the peasant's unhappy child to seek refuge in the grave; and the tidings at once reached William Caillet, that the complaint had been made, the sentence given, and the decree rendered null by the death of his unhappy victim.

The matter was different now; where he might have resisted with obduracy and daring hardihood, had there been a possibility of his obedience being put to the test, it now became his policy to yield, and feign repentance. He expressed, and perhaps, indeed, felt much and deep regret at all that had occurred; but he stopped not there: he falsified the truth, and vowed that it had been his intention to do right to the unhappy girl, had not her own rash act prevented it. All the atonement in his power he offered willingly to make, but that atonement soon reduced itself to nothing; for the father, in mourning and indignation, would never see or hear mentioned one whom he looked upon as the betrayer and murderer of his child.

The heart of Caillet, though it had condescended to hypocrisy, burned within him when he remembered the words of repentance which he had spoken, and the bitter reproofs of the count; and, though his lord forgave his offence, and forgot, or nearly forgot, the circumstance altogether, Caillet neither forgave nor forgot. Feelings of anger and malevolence mingled with all his thoughts and sensations. He longed for revenge upon one who had humiliated him; and, though in his anger the count had been but just—while in all his preceding conduct he had been generous, kind, and sparing—yet Caillet only remembered the bitter terms of reprobation and reproach in which his noble master had spoken of his error.

He dreamed still, though the count had placed his

real situation clearly before his eyes, and, in determining to wed him to one of the lowliest peasants, had shown him the point of view in which he looked upon him. Still Caillet mingled Adela with his visions, but in a different manner from before. He thought no longer of winning her admiration by high deeds and mighty efforts; he thought not of acquiring power, and honour, and station, that he might obtain her, in despite of all the obstacles of birth; but he thought—or, rather, dreamed, for it deserved not the name of thought—of gaining, like Artevelde, mighty sway and great dominion, solely as a means of compelling her father humbly to meet his wishes, and, willing or unwilling, to make Adela his bride.

Each day, however, as he lived and became more perfectly acquainted with the state of the country and the society around him, such phantasms became less frequent and less vivid, though the ambition still existed, and even grew stronger every hour, while bitter discontent and envious jealousy followed naturally in its train. To such departed dreams succeeded things more dangerous: schemes and plans, at first vague and fanciful, and little more tangible than the visions that went before. But his was a nature not to wait for opportunities, but to strive to make them; and other circumstances, which we shall soon mention, by increasing the intensity of all his passions, and adding a fresh one of still more terrible power, made him behold the disasters which befell his native country with joy and satisfaction, looking upon anarchy and strife as the only means by which his ends could be accomplished.

The circumstances to which we have alluded were these: Some three or four years after he himself had entered into the household of the Count of Mauvinet, Albert Denyn, then scarcely more than a mere child, had appeared in it also. Caillet had at that time all the best feelings of youth about him; and though at first he felt some degree of boyish jealousy at the favour of the new-comer, it soon passed away, and they became companions and friends. Even the youthful fondness of Adela and Albert did not seem to pain or strike him; for, although the latter was somewhat older than his lord's daughter, Caillet regarded him merely as a boy; and a report to which the count's fondness for Albert gave rise, that he was, in fact, a natural son of that nobleman,

tended to remove everything like jealousy. At length, when Albert Denyn was about sixteen or seventeen years of age, he was absent in Paris, and in the Beauvoisis, for nearly a year and a half, part of the time with the prior, and part of the time with the count; and about the same period, also, the Lady of Mauvinet died, leaving but one son, then a somewhat weakly boy. It was shortly after that event that some one thought fit to jest with the Lord of Mauvinet on his fondness for Albert, alluding to the report which I have mentioned. The count replied with so much indignation, in Caillet's hearing, that every suspicion of the kind was removed from his mind at once.

It was not, however, till Albert returned that Caillet himself understood how great a change the conviction that his companion was in no degree allied to the house of Mauvinet had made in his feelings; but when he did come back, changed and improved in every respect, a man instead of a boy, full of eager life and powerful energies, and, withal, a self-command and strong determination in right, which won him respect and esteem from all around, new sensations rose up in Caillet's breast towards his young companion, and he soon learned to hate him with a mortal antipathy.

It is quite true that in the bosom of virtue there exists, as it were, a touchstone for vice, and that touchstone acted powerfully in the breast of Adela, for from a very early period she conceived a dislike towards Caillet, which nothing could ever remove; and it must also be said, that, by some acts of insolent presumption, he contrived to render her aversion more marked and painful to himself. But in the heart of Albert Denyn the test did not produce the same effect, at least so soon. He had been Caillet's companion for many years; and when he returned, it was long before he found that there was no longer between them that bond of union which had existed in their boyhood. He confided, he trusted, as before; but day by day, and hour by hour, there came upon him convictions that Caillet was not worthy of the place he held in the household of the Count de Mauvinet; that he loved not the hand that showered benefits on his head; that he was discontented, even with the high favour in which he stood; in short, that there was a bad spirit within his breast, though it was difficult to discover to what it tended or what it sought.

In the mean while, the change in Caillet himself went on. He soon became convinced that Adela loved him not, but he did not abandon on that account 'any one of his purposes or hopes. He saw that it would be necessary, indeed, to pursue those hopes and purposes more circumspectly; and as he was naturally of a reserved and impenetrable nature, he shut up his thoughts and feelings in his own bosom, waiting for the time—which he judged to be near approaching—when, in the overthrow of all order, and the disruption of all the principles of society, he might burst the bonds that held him, and gratify every passion of his heart. His hatred for Albert Denyn, and his love for Adela, or, rather, the sort of passion which he called love—for it deserved not really the name—went hand in hand with his ambition; and every murmur of the peasantry of France, every scene of misery on the one part, and violence and wrong on the other, called up the hopes of obtaining possession of Adela by any means, however harsh and violent, and of destroying him whom he envied by any device, however base and wicked.

Even while he was jealous of Albert, however, his vanity led him to undervalue him; and when he saw the growing attachment of the youth towards Adela de Mauvinet, and the notice which she bestowed upon him, believing it impossible that she could ever really love him, he did all that he could to encourage Albert, without seeming to do so, in a course which he hoped and believed would lead him to destruction. He pictured to himself with joy the indignation of the Lord of Mauvinet, should he ever discover that the creature of his bounty had ventured to look with the eyes of love upon his daughter; and the words of anger and indignation, which he had sometimes feared might fall upon himself, he hoped to hear poured forth upon his young companion.

Such had been his feelings shortly before the opening of this book, and the changes that they underwent afterward have explained themselves. It may easily, then, be conceived what were his sensations now, when, under the impulse of passion and opportunity, he had taken a step which his better judgment told him was rash, if not absolutely foolish, and when the result had been total disappointment, and, for the time, apparent ruin and destruction.

There was now no return for him, no repentance, no recovery: the act was done that shut him out forever from a look behind: in the energy of despair was his only hope; and the entire overthrow of every existing thing was the only instrument which he could now employ. It might have seemed, at first sight, that he had little opportunity to bring such great things to pass—that he was friendless, helpless, powerless. It was so, and yet Caillet did not despair of being able still to break up the very principles of society in the land wherein he lived, and by such means to work out his own dark ends. There was a strong impression upon him that great minds make the circumstances in which they live, and that a powerful will, joined to native genius, can do all. In some degree perhaps he was right, though he knew not that the greatest of all moral powers is virtue, and that, wanting that, he wanted the crowning energy of all, which ensures to genius and to resolution the utmost success that it can obtain on earth. It was a defect that he felt not, and therefore he was confident, even in the midst of disappointment and reverse.

He had made now his way across the land alone: everywhere he had heard of warring parties, and bands which might oppose his course. He found fear and anxiety wherever he turned, but he had gone on in safety. Obstacles had seemed to disappear from before his steps, and from such facility he derived an augury of future success. He had now reached a spot where he knew that much misery existed; where various fierce bands of adventurers, during his lord's absence, had ravaged and destroyed. He was aware, also, that among the peasantry of many of the neighbouring nobles, tyranny and oppression of the basest kind had been exercised by the lords of the soil themselves. Here, then, he was sure to find want, and grief, and discontent; and those were the elements with which he proposed to work.

With almost every one in the neighbourhood around William Caillet was more or less acquainted; but the rough and honest peasant, though he might be led at an after period to follow the multitude, was not the person suited to his present purpose; and with careful skill he sought for the dwellings of those alone who could serve him as tools or assist him as confederates.

At a late hour, then, as we have shown, he wandered

on through the wood, notwithstanding the darkness, and the danger, and the solitude, although he might have found many a dwelling far nearer to the place at which night overtook him, where the inhabitants, ignorant of what had taken place at Mauvinet, would have received him with pleasure and hospitality. At length he stopped at the door of a hut, one of the poorest, apparently, in all the land around, in the aspect of which there was nothing, certainly, to attract the wayfaring traveller, and make him hope for either accommodation or welcome there. It was situated upon the extreme edge of the forest, in the depths of the low brushwood which surrounded it; and it seemed, in fact, though it was not so, to be the abode of some inferior woodman or keeper of the game. It consisted of four square walls of mud, and a roof thatched with fern and straw mingled together. There was a window on either side, that is to say, an aperture, which, at that late hour of the night, was blocked up with a board of rough sapin. All appeared dark therein, except where a treacherous flaw in the woodwork betrayed at one point a faint glimmering of light, showing that the fire was not yet extinguished. Behind the building were seen several low sheds, from which, every now and then, issued forth an inharmonious noise, announcing that the master of the abode was a feeder of that useful sort of beast, which contributes, perhaps, more than any other, to the support and convenience of man in almost every country of the world.

When opposite the dark line of the hut, Caillet paused and gazed around him. "Still the same," he said to himself, "still the same! misery, and filth, and dirt! They have cut down much wood here," he continued, "and doubtless it will be said that the enemy did it, the adventurers, the free companions. They are good friends to the warm farmer's fireside, however much he may cry out upon them. One half of the fuel they take goes to keep him warm, that is certain. It matters not to me, however: this poor wretch here dare not cut down the wood, I fancy. He has not been taught to dare yet: we will see whether he be an apt scholar;" and, turning to the door, he knocked aloud, exclaiming, "Ho! within there! let me in!"

At first no answer was returned, and again Caillet struck heavily upon the door, exclaiming, "Let me in

there! it is vain to pretend sleep: I see the light through the crevices: open the door."

"Get thee gone, get thee gone," cried a surly voice from within, answering him at length: "get thee gone while thou art safe and well: if thou stayest longer, I will give thee a shot with the crossbow."

"A crossbow!" exclaimed Caillet, with a sneering laugh; "where shouldst thou get a crossbow, poor wretch! it is I, Morne! it is I, William Caillet! Let me in, I say. Prate not to me of crossbows, man; thou that never hadst an iron pike in thy life, where shouldst thou get a crossbow?"

"Do not open, do not open!" cried a woman's voice: "it cannot be Caillet: Caillet is far away."

"It is Caillet, sure enough," replied the man's voice again; "I know him by his scoff."

"A good distinction," said Caillet to himself. "Come, open the door, Jacques Morne: I want shelter for the night; and, though I might as well, I know, lie with one of thy pigs as in thy cottage, yet I want to speak to thee; so undo the bolt, man."

His tone and words leaving no longer any doubt of his identity, the door was opened, though still not without some hesitation. A faint light burst forth from some embers which were yet glowing on the hearth, and a dark and ragged figure presented itself in the doorway, holding a crossbow in one hand, while over his right shoulder peeped the wild countenance of a woman, affording a terrible picture of misery and want. A loud, unpleasant laugh burst from the man when he saw William Caillet, and he exclaimed aloud, "I told you so: I knew him by his scoff."

"Come, come," exclaimed Caillet, "let us in, and tell me what you can give me for supper: I am hungry, Morne."

"Hungry!" exclaimed the man—"supper! then you may remain hungry for all the supper you will find here: why I have been hungry for the last ten years, and never yet, but once, found sufficient food to say that I was not."

"Ay, it is a sad case," said Caillet; "and yet you have no reason to complain."

"No reason to complain!" replied the man: "if I have not, who has, I wonder?"

"No one," answered Caillet, abruptly, "no one that

suffers it. Why, think you now, that if you choose to go on starving all your days, and, moreover, seeing your wife and children starve too, think you that men will come and put food into your mouth when you might take it if you would? But get thee in, poor wretch, get thee in: stand not there with thy jaws apart, as if thunderstruck at hearing truth for once in thy life; get thee in and close the door, and I will find means to provide a supper both for myself and thee."

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## CHAPTER XIX.

Among all the great moral lessons that Shakspeare, the greatest, perhaps, of all uninspired moralists, ever gave, there is none more striking, none that would be more beneficial to the human heart, if we would but apply and follow it, than the exhortation, "Take physic, pomp; expose thyself to feel what wretches feel." Well, well were it for us—well for the hearts of the rich, even more than for the comforts of the poor whom they visit, were that lesson more generally applied.

Did we examine with our own eyes, misery enough of all kinds would indeed be found in the world, at any time the search was made; but in the present day it would be hardly possible to meet with anything equal to that which the cottage of many a French peasant presented at the period of which I speak.

That into which Caillet now entered was superior, in various respects, to some, and yet what was it that he found? A long crazy shed of rough timber, with the interstices filled up with mud; the floor was of the mere earth of the forest, beaten down by the treading of feet; and in the thatch above, at many points, as well as in several parts of the walls, were seen crevices, through which the night wind whistled at liberty, and the rain of winter might find free admittance. No bed did the place possess, except two piles of heath and withered leaves, nestled in one of which slept soundly two rosy babes, the children of hardihood and want. At the farther side, immediately underneath a round hole in the roof of the cottage, was a spot where the rare and scanty

fire was made, and on which still glimmered a few dying embers, the only object which gave an appearance of cheerfulness to the desolate hut.

Caillet's eyes fixed there as he entered, and the unhappy owner of the place immediately exclaimed, as if fearful of blame, "It was all dry wood, branches that had fallen—I picked it up myself when I was driving out the swine."

"And do you think that I would betray you if it were not?" demanded Caillet. "Poor fool, am not I of the same class that you are? likely to meet with the same misery whenever it pleases the tyrants above us? think you that I would betray you?"

"I know not, I know not," answered Jacques Morne: "many a villain betrays another for what he can get."

"Then he is only fit to be a noble," replied Caillet, with a sneering smile; "but that is the fault, Morne, that is the fault—we are not united among ourselves: were we so, those men could not oppress us; but I will soon show you that I am not one of those who would betray you. Give me yon hatchet; I will speedily mend your fire."

The wretched peasant gave him the hatchet as he had demanded; and Caillet, opening the door again, went out and returned a moment after, loaded with several large branches of wood. "There," he said; "if any one asks you, tell him it was William Caillet who did it."

"Ay," answered the other, "and then, perhaps, they may punish me for William Caillet's fault."

"If they do," replied Caillet, "I will punish them. Now make you up the fire, and give me the crossbow: the moon is coming up; and though one might have better food than venison at this season of the year, we must not be too particular when hunger presses."

"What are you going to do?" exclaimed the man, turning pale at the very thought of any one killing his lord's game; "what are you going to do? Nay, Caillet, nay, think what you are about."

"I have thought, and right well," replied Caillet; "and I will tell you what I have thought, Morne; that these good beasts which God puts upon the earth—these good beasts in their brown coats, I say, were not sent hither for the benefit of those who call themselves lords, alone, but to feed mankind whenever man was hungry. The days are changing, and all this will be set to rights."

Give me the crossbow, man, give me the crossbow! I know what I am doing;" and, snatching it from the unwilling hand of the swineherd, he once more went forth, but this time was somewhat longer absent.

Taking his way through the wood, he cut across a small angle in the neighbourhood of the cottage, till he came to the extreme verge of the forest, where the trees broke away, and some meadows and cornfields were seen out beyond, in the clear light of the rising moon. There he stationed himself, among some brushwood, under the shadow of a tall tree; being careful, however, to place himself on the side opposite to that from which the wind blew. He had waited some ten minutes, and was beginning to grow impatient, when, suddenly, he perceived, coming forth into the light, with a hopping, unequal pace, a large hare, every now and then stopping and raising up its long ears to listen for any approaching danger. The first sound that the unfortunate animal heard was the twang of Caillet's crossbow; and the moment after, before it could spring away, the unerring bolt struck it, and it fell over struggling in the agonies of death.

"This is better than larger game," said Caillet, lifting it from the ground: "it is enough, and will leave no traces." He then returned to the cottage, or rather hut, and, throwing down the hare before the peasant's wife, he said, "There, make it ready, my good woman, quickly; and be in no fear, I will answer for what I have done."

"Oh, I am in no fear," replied the woman: "it is he who is so frightened. Often do I tell him that we were never intended to starve; and that if food is not given to him he must take it."

"You speak wisely, you speak wisely," said Caillet: "I know not why we should be hungry more than the men that live in castles; do you, good dame!"

"No, by my faith, not I," rejoined the woman; "and though it is not for myself I care, yet my children shall have food."

The man had looked on in silence, but the mention of the children roused him; and he exclaimed, "They should not be hungry long, were there any other means of finding them meat for one day, without depriving them of it the next. Here Caillet dares to take a hare, or very likely a roe, were he to find one, because he is a favour-

ite of his lord, who would protect him against mine; but were I to kill either one or the other, who would protect me from a dungeon, if not from hanging? and then, what would become of the children?"

"Why, they would not be much worse than they were before," replied the woman, in a sharp tone, which instantly called forth a reply from her husband of an angry kind.

But Caillet waved his hand, exclaiming, "Cease, cease: this is one of the consequences of misery, dissension instead of union; but all this shall soon come to an end. I tell thee, Jacques Morne, that the time is not far off when the fire shall blaze freely on every peasant's hearth through France, and when no one shall ask him where the meat came from that fills his pot."

"Those will be bright times indeed," replied the man, with a doubtful shake of the head; "but when will they come, Caillet, when will they come? Is not every day making our condition worse instead of better? We were always poor, now we are wretched; we were always slaves to one lord, but now we are beat about by thousands."

"True, true," answered Caillet; "and it wants but one thing more to produce the change I have mentioned."

"And what is that?" demanded the man, eagerly, "what is that?"

"That the thousands buffet you," replied Caillet, "till you can endure no longer; till you remember that you are many; till you are ashamed of being slaves to the few, and rend their chains asunder, as if they were but bands of straw. I say to you, that if they crush you, you deserve to be crushed; if they tread upon you, you deserve to be trampled; for every man that suffers tyranny commits a crime against his fellow-slaves."

Jacques Morne gazed down upon the ground for several minutes. "It is all very true," he answered at length, "it is all very true, I dare say, and many a man would rise to shake off this accursed state if we knew what to do, and how to do it. As the woman says, we could not be much worse than we were before. I have often thought, when we sat shivering here, without food, or fire, or light, or hope, that it would be better to kill her and then, and then myself. I can't help believing that death would be very comfortable to people that suffer as we do; but yet we have no one to guide us, to lead us, or

tell us how to act; and suppose I were to say that I would bear it no longer; that I am a man as well as the Lord of St. Leu; that I would have right, and food for my children; that no one had any business to make me carry wood to the castle upon my back, and for my pains only give me blows to make me go on faster, what would be the consequences, Caillet? what if a dozen were to do so? We should all be beaten till we were black and yellow, and most likely five or six of us would be hung from the branches of the oak or the spouts of the castle. Is it not so?"

"Most likely it is," replied Caillet, coolly, "and serve you very right too, if you did such things without due deliberation and counsel. You want somebody to lead you, and tell you what to do: is it so? Well, I will do both, Morne: only promise me, that when I do tell you what to do, I shall find you ready to show yourself a man, and not a mere beast of the forest, as these tyrants would make you. Promise me, too, that you will not speak one word of these things till the time is come, and I give you leave."

"Why, I thought but now," said Jacques Morne, "that you cared not who knew of your actions: you bade me tell them that you took the wood, that you killed the game."

"So I did," replied Caillet, "and so I tell you still. Should it be ever inquired into, say so, at your will. It is no personal risk I fear. But I tell thee, Morne, that did I suspect for one minute thou wouldst go and betray my counsel in matters where others are concerned, that thou wouldst frustrate my hopes of delivering the peasantry of France, by saying that Caillet is here or Caillet is there, stirring up the people to revolt, I would take up yon axe and dash out thy brains this moment. But I know thee better, and have no fear: there is about thee an honesty, made dogged by oppression, and which our tyrants call sullenness, which will make thee bear the rack or the bernicles, sooner than betray my trust."

"No, no," replied the man, "I will not betray thee; but I fear you deceive yourself, Caillet, and that, with all your fine words, you will find no one to be the first."

Caillet laughed bitterly. "I am the first myself," he said: "I have been the first to shake off the yoke. I, at least, am a free man, if none will follow me. The tyrants now know me, as I have long known them. I

have cast their chains from off my hands, I tell thee, and have spat at and defied them ; and though their blood-hounds have been out after me over the whole land, they have not caught me, Morne."

"Ay, this is something like now," cried the other, grasping his hand: "once the strife begun, and there is hope ; but tell me more, Caillet, tell me more."

"When the time comes I will tell you all," replied Caillet: "at present there is but little to tell. Were I alone to set myself up against these men, and put myself in their power, it would be the same with me as with you. We must have union, we must take counsel with others, we must have many men of different characters and kinds combined ; we must conceal our purposes and our plans ; we must have meetings of few and meetings of many, and we must pretend that all these meetings have no other view than to deplore our sad condition, and the lamentable state of all France, given up as a spoil to the enemy. Then we must choose the best occasion ; and when we have ensured the aid of numbers, and the good-will of more ; when men's minds are excited by the story of their own sufferings, and their passions are hot, with a view of the wealth and prosperity of others, then we must suddenly call upon them to do great deeds, and let them rise against their enemies, before pale fear has time to make them hesitate. Once begun, the conquest of our freedom is half accomplished, for no man will then dare go back ; for victory alone will give us security, at the same time that it gives us power, and wealth, and happiness."

While Caillet spoke, his companion gazed down upon the ground, and strange were the manifold expressions that passed over his countenance. That countenance itself was naturally dull and inexpressive ; but when upon such a face strong passions display themselves by outward signs, the effect is even greater than where the features are naturally less cold and heavy. Sometimes it seemed as if his whole soul were carried away by the bright hopes which Caillet's words displayed before his eyes ; at other times, however, doubts seemed to rise up, and fears to take possession of his breast, as well they might, for at that time the dream of resisting their feudal tyrants had never yet entered into the mind of any of the peasantry of France, except that of the bold man who now addressed him. The words which he heard,

however, the confidence with which his companion spoke, the natural ascendancy of hope in the human mind, all had their effect; and the thought of revenge, which was pleasant to him, as well as enjoyment and abundance, which he had never known, all affected him in turns, and made him resolve to dare the worst rather than lose the prospect of things so coveted.

All he replied, however, was, "Thou art a bold man, Caillet, thou art a bold man."

"I am," answered Caillet, with his usual sneer upon his lips, "and I hope that thou art a bold man too, Morne, for none but bold men deserve to be free. I work not to liberate willing slaves: those that are so may remain so for me: but those who thirst for freedom, as I do myself, I will make free, if it be in the power of man to do so; and that it is in our power who can doubt? Are we not in numbers as ten to one? are we not more hardy, more inured to want, and privation, and fatigue than they are? You will say that they have arms; let us take their weapons from them; wealth, that wealth will soon be ours, if we do but strive rightly to make it so. Riches will then bring many to our cause, who leave us lonely so long as we are poor, and despise us so long as we are submissive. The people of the towns, who have set us the example in a long and bloody struggle with the men who were then their tyrants, and are now ours; they will aid us too, when they see us resolved and ready; they, too, will assist and make common cause with us, when they find that we will bear the yoke no longer. Though they have accomplished their own freedom, they still suffer many grievances: they will take the opportunity to redress those, while we redress ours; and even were they to seek nothing but their selfish benefits, they would do us good by dividing the power of the lords."

"Thou hast thought of it all," replied Jacques Morne, "thou hast thought of it all: I will go with thee, Caillet, to the death."

"Go with me to life and happiness, Morne," replied Caillet, in a tone full of confidence. "If we are resolute and true to ourselves, death is far from us; death is for those who oppose men seeking their liberty. But we must have much counsel, Morne. Do you remember an old man who lived upon the hill above Clermont, who had great experience and some learning; who had been with his lord into foreign lands, had seen many a strange

sight, and marked many a curious fact? Is he living still?"

"Oh yes," replied the other, "he is living, and still there—old Thibalt, you mean; but I know not how it is, he is not loved."

"Wise men are seldom loved," replied Caillet, "because they have to deal with fools."

"Ay," answered Morne; "but it is not for that, Caillet, that old Thibalt is not loved: it is, that he does good to no one: though he has plenty of money, he gives not to those who are poor. He thinks of himself and of his own cunning; and when he hears of our miseries, he only laughs at them."

"Well may he laugh," rejoined Caillet, "when you are fools enough to bear the misery that you could redress with your own hands. Well may he laugh and set you at naught. And yet," he continued, seeing that Morne's brow grew somewhat contracted, "and yet, what you say is, in some degree, true: the man is selfish, he always was; but in this world who is not, Morne? who thinks not more or less of himself in all the concerns of life? I pretend to no such virtue; and the man who does pretend to it, be sure, is a hypocrite. However, we have nothing to do with his motives, so that he helps us with his counsel. If he joins us, it will be the surer sign of our success."

"Ay, that it will," answered the other; "for there is not a man throughout the land who will not say, 'Old Thibalt would not have joined them unless they had been sure to win.'"

"Then his name is, in itself, a host," replied Caillet; "for the expectation of success is the great first step to it. But now let us see where I can sleep o' nights, Morne? Can you not place me somewhere where I can remain unknown, and you can visit me after dark?"

"Then you are obliged to conceal yourself," said Morne. "I thought that you were come openly and boldly to proclaim our liberty."

"Would that I could do so!" replied the other. "Have I not already said that all depends on caution? and with me life itself hangs on prudence. You must meet, Morne, without my presence; you must consult without my being there. You must seem scarce to know that such a person exists; and yet you must tell me all things that take place, and act by my directions alone!"

Is this asking much, perhaps too much, Morne? You may, however, follow or reject the advice I give you. You may betray me or not, as you like, yourself: it is for you to choose, for you to determine. I only tell you the way, the only way by which your freedom can be worked out: having so done, you must do the rest. In three days the news will follow me hither that William Caillet has rebelled against his lord and fled. Then every man that is seen with him, or who dares consort with him, even for an hour, will stamp himself forever as an enemy to our lordly tyrants, and for him the dungeon or the gallows will be all that is left. I have put myself in your power, Morne, and you can do what you will; but depend upon it, that with my fate is wrapped up your own freedom."

"You are right, Caillet, you are right," said Jacques Morne, "and I will do as you would have me. I have thought of a place, too, where you can lodge like a boar in his lair. Do you not know in the middle of the wood there is a hut, where I saw you once when your lord came hither to hunt with mine? I was to have had it first for my dwelling, but it was judged that I should be better here; and so they changed their purposes and brought me hither. No one has inhabited it, but it is still good; and very often, when I drive the swine into that part of the forest, I sit therein, and think how happy man might be if other men would let him. There you can have as good a house as this is; and there is a way out behind, too, by the dingle and over the hill; so that in any time of need you have naught to do but to slip out by the door behind, and away. I can visit you there every night, and bring you what you want."

"Which will be but small," replied Caillet, "nor will my hiding last long. However, Morne, as thou wilt have to purchase for me something, here is money. Of that I have got abundance, and can command more. There is a golden crown for you, take that; and early to-morrow buy me some wine, and bring it to—"

"A golden crown!" cried the man, taking the money in his hand and looking at it: "bring thee wine, Caillet! Dost thou drink wine?"

"Ay," answered Caillet, "and so shalt thou, Morne, if thou followest what I tell thee to do! wine shall be as plentiful with thee, ere a month pass over, as it is at the table of the best lord in all the land; but in the mean

time thou shalt share of mine: so take the money, and let the wine be bought."

"A golden crown!" repeated the man: "I dare not take it, Caillet. They would not give me the wine, and would ask me loudly where I got the gold. They would say I had stolen it, and take me to a prison."

"Fy! nonsense!" exclaimed his wife, who was by this time deep in the mysteries of cooking a hare in the most simple fashion: "thou art a fool, Jacques: give me the crown, and I will buy the wine. Then, should any one ask me, I will say that a charitable gentleman going through the forest gave me the money. No fear; there is no fear, man! No fear; give me the money! Now, Master Caillet, your supper shall be ready ere ten minutes more are over; and if you give us such every night in the week, you shall have my prayers and the blessings of the children. So, if my husband fail thee, I will not; and he must follow where I lead, I trow."

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## CHAPTER XX.

It was the third morning after that which succeeded the visit of Caillet to the swineherd's cottage, and he now sat in solitude within a lonely hut, situated in the midst of one of those wide forests which in that day covered a very large portion of the soil of France. His habitation was composed of rough wood; and, as a change of mind had taken place among the builders while the small tenement was being erected, the mud with which the crevices were to have been filled had been applied but to one side of the building; so that the other three were only stopped by a quantity of dried leaves and moss which had been crammed into the crevices. Many efforts had been made to give the place an air of comfort since Caillet himself had tenanted it; but the attempt had produced very little effect, and the aspect of the interior was that of desolation. A stool and a table had been formed of the crooked branches of the trees; and the bed of dry leaves which one corner contained had been delicately covered over with moss, which glistened in its fresh greenness as if a velvet pall had been

there cast down upon the ground. A fire was lighted in another corner, for it was now cold, and in a third stood several of the large leathern bottles which were the common vehicles of wine in those days.

The face of Caillet, however, was dark and gloomy, and bitter as well as agitated were the images which tenanted his bosom. Hope has not so terrible an enemy as long, solitary thought; and for several days Caillet had remained there, only seeing the swineherd once in the course of the evening, shortly after the sun had gone down. While he had been actively employed in threading the dangerous ways between Touraine and the Beauvoisis, his mind had rested little upon the past, and he had gone on, day by day, thinking only of the present. Such, however, was not the case now: he was alone, without occupation for mind or body during the greater part of the day; and upon the past—though contemplation could not have chosen a more painful subject—all his thoughts now dwelt, whether he would or not.

Oh happy, thrice and fully happy is the man who can suffer his mind calmly to repose upon memory, without finding ought in all her stores to darken and embitter his review of the times gone. Such, however, was not at all the case with William Caillet; there was scarcely one spot on which his eye rested, as he looked back, which did not offer something painful to his sight. Besides the thousand opportunities cast away through life, which every man has to regret; besides the follies and the faults committed, with which very few, even of the best, may not reproach themselves, there were innumerable opportunities wilfully neglected, there were innumerable faults and follies knowingly performed.

But, besides regrets that would intrude, there was a sensation, the most painful of all others, creeping upon Caillet at this time: a sensation which nothing could have produced in a mind so vain and stubborn as his, so proud, so resolute, except the power of solitary thought; it was the conviction that he might be wrong, the consciousness that, if he had chosen another path, he might have been wiser, greater, happier than he ever could be now, even were his efforts to be crowned with the utmost success. But there was something more than even that conviction, something which aggravated the pain thereof in a very great degree; it was a growing

belief that those efforts were not likely to succeed ; that the men he had calculated upon for great deeds were not capable of accomplishing them ; that vast objects—we must not call them good ones—could not be appreciated or understood by the beings he had to work upon ; and that those even who had some faint glimmering of higher things and more important purposes than mere temporary deliverance from a particular inconvenience, each proposed to himself some individual benefit, some personal advantage, which would, in all probability, interrupt the pursuit of any great general object at every step, and ultimately overthrow the whole enterprise. He cursed them all in his heart, and—strange as it may seem to those before whose eyes the whole of Caillet's selfishness and baseness has been openly displayed—he railed at the persons through whose interested pursuit of their own views his purposes were likely to be frustrated, as bitterly as if he himself had been actuated by the most disinterested patriotism, and as if everything that he did was undertaken solely for the benefit of his fellow-creatures. The doubt of attaining his present object was to him a curse, indeed, during his solitary hours ; for on success his every hope was staked ; and when he thought of Adela de Mauvinet and her disdain, of Albert Denyn and his good fortune, of the noble master whom he had repaid with ingratitude and injury ; when he thought of all these, I say, and at the same time feared that his schemes would not succeed, the bitterness of his heart knew no bounds.

Often would he start from his seat and take two or three steps across the hut in angry haste, and then return to the settle again, and brood in dark despondency over every gloomy feature of his fortune. There was still one idea, however, which seemed to comfort him, and produced a dark and savage smile of satisfaction whenever his mind rested on it.

"They will certainly rise," he said to himself, "they will certainly rise ; for that, at least, they are ripe, if not for greater things. Some revenge will assuredly be mine ; and that is the first object ; I shall have some vengeance, if I have nothing more."

But still, sad thoughts and anticipations would return. The old man Thibalt had never visited him, though he had twice sent to urge him so to do ; and from the reluctance which such conduct displayed, he naturally

supposed that the wary veteran suspected his views, and judged not favourably of his enterprise. He was now waiting the result of a third application, couched in such terms as he fancied might awaken the avarice of the old man, for his ambition he had failed to arouse ; and the period which his impatience had fixed as necessary for his messenger to return had already long expired, so that he was meditating gloomily upon the next step to be taken, giving, from time to time, a bitter look towards the past or a desponding gaze towards the future, when some sounds, as of coming feet, met his ear ; and, gazing through one of the chinks in the dilapidated wall, he beheld the swineherd Morne on foot, accompanied by the old man Thibalt riding on an ass.

The hopes of Caillet rose ; but he had learned, as every one will learn who gives himself up to the sway of evil passions, to be an actor—a dissembler, if not a hypocrite ; and to assume such an aspect as was calculated to produce a certain effect upon the minds of others, instead of allowing the natural emotions of his own mind to appear.

That man has suffered a great and terrible loss, a loss of one of the heart's best jewels, who has been taught to frame his words and looks with a reference to the opinion of others rather than to his own feelings, whose tones have an object, whose smiles and frowns are schemed. Doubtless it was the purpose of the Great Being who gave to man such varied powers of expressing his sensations—the infinite shades of intonation in the voice, the rapid play of features, and even the movements of the limbs—doubtless it was his will that all should harmonize, the one with the other, and the whole be the pure expression of the human heart ; and yet, since evil has had dominion over the human race, and all the gifts of God have been perverted, how rarely, except in a child, do we find the countenance and the lips speaking together the real emotions of the spirit, and the unadulterated thoughts of the mind.

William Caillet, however, had been long too deeply plunged in evil purposes and vain ambitions to retain anything like candid truth about him ; and though his was a bold hypocrisy, the hypocrisy of pride and strong passions, he was none the less a dissembler. In the present instance he knew well the character of the man with whom he had to deal ; and though he trembled at

the idea of losing the aid of one whose cunning and experience supplied the place of those qualities which he himself wanted, he prepared to receive him with no crouching persuasions, but with that daring and firm demeanour which was the most opposite to the spirit of Thibalt himself. He knit his brow then, he set his teeth, and, folding his arms upon his chest, sat with his fine lustrous eyes fixed upon the door of the hut till it opened, and the swineherd and his companion appeared.

"So you are come at length, Master Thibalt!" he said, with a frown. "Pray, why came you not when first I sent for you? By Heaven, I have no light mind to take and dash your brains out against the doorpost for keeping me here two whole days when I have business elsewhere!"

He spoke so furiously that the old man drew back in evident alarm; but the moment after he replied, "Nay, nay, Master Caillet, I could not come when you first sent: I had people with me, as Jacques Morne can tell you, and—"

"And you had heard," added Caillet, with a look of scorn, "that William Caillet had rebelled against his lord and set him at defiance—"

"Ay, and tried to carry off his daughter!" rejoined Thibalt, with a low laugh that he could not suppress.

"And, moreover, that there is a reward offered for his head! Is it not so?" added Caillet, bitterly.

"No, no! Is there?" exclaimed the old man, with his eyes twinkling at the idea of profitable treachery.

"I heard not of it. Have they offered a reward?"

"I know not," answered Caillet, "and little care; for no man will betray me."

"Are you sure of that, good William?" asked the old man, with a grin; "quite sure? There are sad villains in France, good Caillet: you must not trust every one. There are many rogues among us."

"But none so bold," rejoined Caillet, "as to betray me, when he is certain of dying within ten days after; for rewards little profit a dead man; and there are more than one hundred of the youths of Touraine bound by oath before the Virgin to kill the man who gives me up, within ten days after the act."

Thibalt sunk into himself again; for though he was not one to believe easily anything but that of which he

had proof, yet the oath Caillet mentioned was so like the times, and a vow before the Virgin to commit murder was so in character with the savage ignorance of the peasantry, that there was a great probability of such an act having taken place. Inasmuch, too, as the term of his earthly being was naturally drawing towards an end, and his hopes regarding the future not very sanguine, he was fearful of losing any portion of a life within which he had bounded his desires, and shrunk from the thought of encountering the menaced death, though even death itself he would have risked for the certain attainment of gold.

"What, then?" he said, after a moment's pause, "you are not sure that there is a reward offered for your apprehension? Then you have nothing to fear."

"I fear nothing, and have nothing to fear, old man," answered Caillet. "If I had, I should not have sent for you, who would sell your own child for the price of a wolf's head."

"Thank God I have no child," replied Thibalt, with his accustomed grin of misanthropic bitterness, "or I know not what might happen. But what is it that you want with me, good Caillet? For though the news has reached us that you have defied the Lord of Mauvinet, and was forcing away his daughter, when you were overtaken by Albert Denyn—good little Albert, who, when he left us last, was as fair a stripling as my eyes ever saw—when you were overtaken by little Albert, I say, who drew upon you, and forced you to give up the lady—"

The old man spoke with premeditated malice; for there is a sort of ill-nature which seems to give an instinctive perception of every weak and painful part in the hearts of our fellow-creatures. But Caillet interrupted him furiously, exclaiming, "He is a liar! a cowardly liar! He force me!"

"Nay, so came the report," replied Thibalt: "I know nothing of it. But what wantest thou with me, Caillet? for, though we have heard all this, yet I see not how I can help thee."

"They have sent forth falsehoods," answered Caillet; "they have sent forth falsehoods, as they always do, to deceive the poor peasantry of France, and prevent them from taking advantage of the only moment that has presented itself for years; the only moment that will ever come for breaking their bonds, and revenging many a

century of oppression; but they shall find themselves deceived. Now will I tell you what I want with you, old Thibalt, if Morne have not already told you; but we must have some one to watch that no enemy comes. Get you up upon the hill, my good friend Morne, and keep an eye upon the country round, while I repeat to Thibalt here all that I have told you already. When we hold council, I will call you. At present, we only speak of what you already know."

Morne showed some unwillingness to be left out of the conference, but obeyed Caillet's directions after a few words of persuasion; while the old man Thibalt remained silent, with his eyes fixed upon the ground, and a look of deep thought taking place of the sarcastic grin upon his countenance.

"Caillet," he exclaimed, as soon as the other was gone, "Caillet, you are either a madman, or much more sure of all your steps than I can believe possible, if you have trusted such an ignorant fool as that."

"I am *not* a madman," answered Caillet, "and I am sure of my steps. But that has nothing to do with my trusting Jacques Morne. He is honest, old Thibalt, and will betray no one. He would bear torture and death sooner than utter a word of what he hears. I know each man with whom I deal, and act as I am sure they deserve at my hands. But think not that I confide either in Morne or any other more than needful. I have sent him hence even now; for, though he may be as serviceable as any other in bold deeds and strong resolutions, yet his head would but embarrass council."

"But you will trust me, good Caillet, you will trust me fully: is it not so?" demanded the old man, his grin returning in a slight degree. "You will make an exception in my favour?"

"No!" answered Caillet, sternly. "Do not suppose, Thibalt, that I am attempting to cajole you; I know you too well for that. You are not apt to be cheated; and, to say truth, are not worth the trouble of cheating. Your qualities are different from those of Morne, and—"

"You desire to use both for your own purposes," interrupted Thibalt.

"And if I do, where is the harm?" demanded Caillet. "We have all our own purposes; and if yours be accomplished at the same time that mine are, what matters it to you? Listen to me. I am willing to trust

you, Thibalt, and to trust you fully; not because you are either honest or true, but because you are not brave; and, knowing what you know, dare not betray me, even were it your interest to do so. You hate the tyrants that grind us as well as I do. I have heard you a thousand times throw out to the peasants, at Christmas-time, such biting hints as would have stung worms to rise; but revenge upon the nobles is not your chief passion. It is love of gold! Now both shall be gratified—both vengeance and avarice. I, on my part—”

“Yet a while, yet a while!” cried the old man: “let us take things in order, Caillet. You have said enough respecting me to require some reply, and I will give you an answer at once upon each head. First, you own that you seek to use all men for your purposes.”

“Not more than they will use me for theirs,” interrupted Caillet: “let each use the other, and each help the other.”

“Well, well, such is wise counsel,” replied the old man; “and so may it be with you and I, Caillet, if we can first understand the preliminaries rightly. But, when you talk of *using* me and Morne for your purposes, you forget it is a long while since I have been so *used*; and I am not a beggar’s dog to guide any man whither he will, without knowing where or why, and with only such a share as he chooses to give me. What I mean is this, Caillet: instead of *using* me, league with me, and we may perchance do much.”

“Such was what I meant,” rejoined Caillet, “if I find you ready and willing; but I am first, Thibalt, and I command, though it may be with your counsel and with your support, if you will give it. If not, say so at once; for you and I know too much to be able to deceive each other.”

“I will speak more on that head by-and-by,” replied the old man. “It is right that we should understand every step as we go; so this one being determined, that I am not to be used, but to be consulted, let me say a word about bravery. What do you call brave, Caillet?”

“That which you are not!” answered Caillet, with the sneer which always curled his lip, in moments of tranquillity resuming its place for the moment. “That which you are not, Thibalt! Bravery is not alone the courage which makes a man fight when he cannot avoid it, for the sparrow and the dove peck impotently the

hand that grasps them ; not the courage which leads man to endure what he cannot avoid, for the bird brought down by the bolt of the fowler utters no cry, but eyes him silently till he wrings its neck. No ; to be brave is to feel the spirit rise and glory at the thought of strife ; to seek the danger, and find the perilous cup of enterprise more inspiring than the strongest wine ; to see, where the way opens in the very face of death, naught but a new road to triumph and to power. This is to be brave."

"And this is what thou art, I know well," replied Thibalt, who caught a spark of his companion's fire from the vehemence with which he spoke ; "and if ever there was a man fit to rouse the slavish peasantry of France to struggle for rights that they have not only lost, but forgotten, thou art he. Nevertheless, I am quite contented with the other sort of courage. As you grant that I can fight when needful, I leave it to you and such as you to fight when it is not so. However, to spare the time which is precious, I will own that now, now is the moment, the only moment that ever France has seen for her peasantry—her true people—to deliver themselves from the bondage of tyrants, who too long have oppressed them ; and that, if this moment goes by, centuries may pass ere the hour come again. I will go farther still, Caillet, and tell thee that, to behold the castles of these lords in flames, and their bodies strewing the plains, over which they have so often driven us like sheep, I would give—I would give this right hand. But I must first see my way clearly, Caillet ; I must be assured of all that is before me ; I must know what is to be the gain, and what the risk, and what the price."

"What is to be gained, Thibalt !" exclaimed Caillet, "what is to be gained ! but I recollect," he added, bitterly ; "I must show you the immediate objects ; I must show you the individual gratifications to be obtained. Listen ! You know the castle of Clermont ; you know its ostentatious lord ; you know the riches that it contains—the gold, the silver, the jewels ! Well, then, Thibalt, what think you will become of all that wealth when, followed by the band of avengers, I set my foot across the threshold of the place ? Now see you what is to be gained ? Our objects are nearly the same, and our rewards will be nearly equal, You seek wealth and revenge, and I revenge and—and—" he was about to add

the word *power*; but his keen, clear insight into every turn of the minds of those with whom he had to act, showed him in time that he might raise up fears against himself which it would be difficult to allay, and he added with a smile, "and I revenge—and love. We will both be gratified, Thibalt—we will both be gratified—ay, and to the full; for I swear to you, by all I hold sacred, that if you go hand in hand with me in this, you shall share as I share in everything that is taken."

The old man laughed with a low, chuckling, well-satisfied laugh; but the next moment some sort of apprehension seemed to come over him, and he said, after looking down upon the ground for a moment or two in thought, "If we should not succeed, Caillet? if we should not succeed?"

"But we shall succeed," exclaimed Caillet, almost fiercely; "what should prevent us from succeeding but our own fears?"

"The fears of others," answered the old man. "What if the peasants will not rise, Caillet? what if, ere a sufficient number are in arms, we are attacked and defeated?"

"They will rise! they will rise!" answered Caillet, confidently; "the fire of discontent and hatred is barely kept down in the breasts of the people. When some holyday bonfire has been piled up, and load after load cast upon it, till the flame seemed smothered out, and every spark of light extinguished, have you not seen, Thibalt, dark smoke rising up in sombre clouds, dull and heavy, and altogether unlike the glorious blaze of the devouring element? then suddenly comes some hand with a small, insignificant light, touches the rolling volume of black vapour, and in a moment all is blaze and brightness! Such, Thibalt, such is the picture of an enslaved people; the fire of liberty still exists within their hearts, though the tyrants throw load after load upon it. From the midst of those loads rise up the clouds of discontent and sullen endurance, and murmured indignation, growing deeper and deeper, and blacker and more black, till, suddenly, some fiery spirit, more daring than the rest, bursts forth into resistance, and the flame spreads from one end of the land unto the other. Such, I tell thee, Thibalt, such is the state of France; now is the moment, and I am the man. Nay, I tell thee more, Thibalt, thou thyself knowest right well that it is

as I have said; none is more convinced than thou art that we are certain of success, or thou wouldst not have come hither. Thou art not a man—well aware as thou art that I am banned and proscribed by these tyrants—thou art not a man, I say, to set thy foot here, unless thou wert right sure that success is likely to follow me."

"I think it is, Caillet, I think it is," replied the old man; "nay, I will own, I little doubt it, for reasons that I will tell thee of hereafter; but yet, I would fain see clearly what is to be the result, should reverse instead of fair fortune attend you. What, I repeat, what if the peasants will not rise? what if our first step be a defeat in arms?"

"I have considered that too," said Caillet; "and though I love not, when once I have thought of all things, and made up my mind to the result, although I love not, I say, to turn back my thoughts to dangers that I have considered and prepared for, yet I will tell thee, Thibalt, what must be the resource, if, as you say, the peasants should not rise, or if we should suffer defeat before our numbers are sufficient. Some brave spirits will join us assuredly, and with them would I form a band, which would scourge the land, rich and poor alike; the rich for having oppressed, the poor for having deserted me; and from the spoils of all I would enrich myself, and those that followed faithfully. Such should be the result in any case of reverse; but, nevertheless, we must take means to prevent reverses, Thibalt. Fancy not that, with all the fire and eagerness of my nature, I seek to hurry forward before things are ripe; far from it, Thibalt, far from it; the greatness of my purpose shall make me patient, and, should it be necessary, for months and months I will consent to walk in darkness and hide myself from my fellow-men. It is upon all these first steps, Thibalt, that I would fain consult you. Is the time come yet, or is it not?"

"I believe it is," replied the old man, "I believe it is. In this part of the country I know that it wants but a spark to kindle the flame of which thou hast spoken. Thou canst judge better, however, thyself of other provinces of France. What are the feelings of the people of the south?"

"Hatred!" answered Caillet; "universal hatred towards their oppressors; but you said, Thibalt, that you would tell me why you augur so well of our success.

If you be not sure as I am of all France, how can you have any confidence in our fortunes?"

"I will tell thee, Caillet," replied the old man. "It is because I count less upon the power of the peasantry, when they have risen, than upon the baseness, the cowardice, and the disunion of their lords. Upon this I count, Caillet; and who shall say that I have not good reason, too, to count upon it, when they see no power in the land to put down even the smallest force of foreign brigands that infests it; when a hundred and fifty of the English islanders dare calmly approach the very gates of Paris, and find none to oppose them while they ravage one of the suburbs of the French capital? If these men have not power to crush a pitiful handful of foreign adventurers, where will they find strength, I ask, to resist the rising up of the people of France? It is upon this I calculate, it is from this I derive my hopes, Caillet."

"Upon that have I reckoned too," replied Caillet; "for I have not thought less deeply than you, Thibalt; but I have gone farther still, and have foreseen that these lords will have no power even to retard us, till we have gained some great and signal triumph. On that triumph will depend the movements of an immense multitude; for not more than one in ten will join us at the first, who will come in when they find that success is upon our side. Nor, Thibalt, is it alone the mere peasantry that will join us when the result is once secure. Have you heard the news from Paris, that met me as I came along, how the people of the towns are already leading the way, and will gladly unite with us when they see us successful?"

"Oh yes," answered the old man, "I have heard of all that; but beware of the townspeople, Caillet: they are proud of their liberty, and are but little anxious that we should share it."

"But we *will* share it," exclaimed Caillet. "Did I not tell you, Thibalt, that I intend to use all men? and these proud communes of the towns as well as others. If you would know my whole purpose, it is to employ the aid of these communes till we have conquered for ourselves, and then to force from them an acknowledgment of the equal rights of all men. Once let the peasantry of France have gained some advantage, Thibalt; once let them be tried in the fierce struggle that must soon follow, and I tell thee such a force will be raised

up that the lords and commons alike shall humbly bow the head before us, and thank us for permitting them to live on equal terms in the same land with ourselves. I have already held some conference with several of these discontented men from the towns, and I know they are ready and willing to make our success complete, as soon as they once see that we are likely to be successful."

"Ay!" said the old man, with a look of some surprise, "and have the citizens, the cautious, careful citizens, have they dealt with you, Caillet, you, banished, and fugitive, and poor, and powerless! Have they, then, held conferences with you, Caillet? their cause must be somewhat hopeless, meseems."

"Banished I am," replied Caillet, "and fugitive I am, but neither powerless nor poor, Thibalt. Deceive yourself not, my good friend: you think that wealth is power; you have yet to learn, perhaps, that power is wealth. Power, too, I have, though you know it not, and power of the kind that gives wealth. This I tell thee, that, though it might be somewhat dangerous to keep much gold in this poor hut, and on the person of a man proscribed and fugitive, as you say, I have as much here as I need, even to accomplish great purposes. Thus this very night I shall give thee five crowns of gold to distribute among the peasantry, with such words as you shall judge fit to produce the effects that we desire. Mind, Thibalt, mind: I know thee well! and therefore it is that I warn thee, this gold is not destined for thyself, and I will exact a strict account of every piece I give thee. Thou shalt not be without thy reward. For thyself, thou shalt have one of these same golden crowns, and more according to the service that thou dost with that which is intrusted to thee."

"But five crowns!" said Thibalt, musing: "the sum is small to distribute among the many whom I shall have to see."

"It is enough," answered Caillet, "it is quite enough, and it, with the gold piece for thyself, is all that I have here now; however, should need be, more can be soon procured. I told thee power was wealth; and be you sure that these good commons would have had no dealings with me had they not found that I possessed such power. Here is the money; and when it is all really and truly spent, spent so that thou canst tell me that for each crown thou hast two men's words to join us, two

men whose hands and heads are worth the purchase, then come to me for more, and thou shalt have it, were it a thousand crowns."

The sight of the gold produced by Caillet at this moment had far more effect upon the old man than anything that had passed before, although it must be owned that the various objections which he had started were more the effect of the natural timidity of age and caution, than any real doubt as to his companion's means of success; for none knew the state of France better than old Thibalt, none knew better than he did the confusion that existed among all classes. He grasped the gold eagerly then, saying, "Ay! this is good now: where did it come from, Caillet? Mauvinet?"

"Mauvinet never saw it since it was coined," replied Caillet. "From Mauvinet I brought nothing with me but a sword and a horse; whatever else I have has been gained since. However, all this matters not, Thibalt: art thou mine, I ask thee, art thou mine?"

"Ay," answered the old man, looking steadfastly at the gold: "as the priests make men say when they wed, I am thine, Caillet, for better, for worse; and, to say truth, I fear little that it will be for the worse; so now let us to counsel: what is the first step to be taken?"

"Nay," said Caillet, "on those points I must have your aid, my good friend. Being once agreed, our interests are inseparable. What is to be done, think you?"

"The first grand thing," replied the old man, "is to get the people to meet in large bodies; it matters not much for what purpose: I think it had better be for prayer—prayer for deliverance from all the many enemies and evils that overwhelm the land. Then the priests themselves, who are the great supporters of our adversaries, will give us their unwitting help. Oh, it is a mighty pleasant jest to make those tyrants cut each other's throats, and I know not which is most hateful to me, priest or noble."

"But what next, what next?" demanded Caillet.

"Why, when they have met," answered the old man, "and when they have begun to pray against their grievances, let some one propose to them to consider how those grievances may be remedied."

"Right, right," exclaimed Caillet: "when once such a thing is discussed it will be easy to point out a way."

"Oh yes, but we must do all gently," replied the old

man : "there must be nothing rebellious, nothing treasonable in the first words, Caillet ; all must be soft, and reasonable, and *very loyal* : we must offer to these noble lords our help and aid against the common enemy ; we must beseech them to take compassion upon France, and exert their mighty valour to put down the plunderers that infest the land."

"Nay, nay," cried Caillet, "they will laugh you to scorn. All this will take too much time to do."

"Ay," said the old man, "to do—but not to propose."

"I understand, I understand now," rejoined Caillet, "and you are right : we must frighten neither lords nor peasantry by the name of great deeds, till great deeds are to be done."

"Assuredly not," answered the old man ; "but as soon as ever the time comes when it is necessary they should be done, then we must suddenly plunge the people into acts that will leave them no choice but to go on or perish : we must put a barrier between them and all repentance, Caillet ; we must dip them deep, deep up to the lips in blood, and with that red flood drown out every spark of remorse."

As he spoke, his shrewd, keen, withered countenance assumed an aspect almost fiendish, in which a degree of savage delight was mingled with bitter hatred, somewhat touched with scorn. That expression contrasted strongly and strangely with the looks of Caillet, who sat for several moments with his eyes bent upon the ground, and, for the time, the lines of anxious grief taking place of the usual contemptuous curl of his lip. Stern and ruthless determination, as well as violent passion and fierce anger, is, from time to time, found even in the character of youth, but it needs long years of hardening experience to render the act of resolving upon dark and evil deeds anything but painful to ourselves. At first the resolution to do wrong to others acts upon our own heart and grieves ourselves ; but afterward, like those stimulating foods which, at first, are painful to the palate, but, in the course of time, become pleasant and even necessary to our existence, evil actions carry their delight with them, as was the case with the old man Thibault. Caillet, however, was not so far advanced in wickedness ; and he felt no slight regret at the thought of being forced, at the very first step, to plunge into an ocean of blood. His vanity had always led him to be-

lieve that the greatness which he would attain might cast a mantle of glory over any deeds that he might be compelled to commit, in order to reach the eminence he coveted, and that he would yet acquire a mighty name, unstained by any but those dignified crimes which human vanity and folly have combined to render honourable. But now, when cold-blooded, premeditated, wholesale murder was thus nakedly proposed to him as the only means of attaining his end, the only hope of rising to power, and when he felt that what his companion said was but too true, and that some barrier must be placed between those that he was to lead and all retreat from the way on which he guided them; when he saw none other that could be raised up, but the dark and bloody one which the old man proposed, his heart experienced the anticipation of remorse; and while one demon seemed to urge him on, others scourged him even for the path which he chose.

"I am afraid," said Caillet, at length, "I am very much afraid that it must be as you say, Thibalt. I would fain spare human blood, if possible; but there seem no other means, and we must take those which present themselves."

"Would fain spare human blood!" exclaimed the old man, with a look of contempt. "What, Caillet, is this you—you, who so speak? This is strange enough: what is it that you pretend to? Would you be a great man or a little one? free or a slave? powerful or impotent? successful or frustrated? If you would be a great man, you must shed blood, William Caillet: all great men have shed blood in this world, and ever will do so. If you would be free, you must shed blood, Caillet, for the times require it, and there is no other means of freedom. If you would have power, you must shed blood: power was never gained but by bloodshed. If you would be successful, you must shed blood; for success can only be purchased by the blood of our tyrants."

"I know it, I know it right well," answered Caillet, "and I am prepared for it, Thibalt; but yet I may be permitted to regret it; and, above all things, at first we must have no mention made of bloodshed to the people: we must let them come to the thought of it by degrees."

"Oh, they will come to the thought of it speedily enough," replied the old man; "the people of France, Caillet, the people of France, is but a tiger chained:

once loose him, and he springs to blood as to his natural food. Our only difficulty will be to keep the risen slaves from drenching the whole land in gore, when sometimes it may be necessary to spare."

"We must try," answered Caillet, "we must try; but, at all events, no more of this for the present to any one; and now tell me, Thibalt, where and when can you hold the first meeting?"

"Why, anywhere," said the old man, in reply; "it matters not much where."

"Nay," answered Caillet, "not so; it matters much, Thibalt; for I must be near at hand, though not present. As you say, it will be better that these assemblings should take place at some religious place. Do you remember the chapel some five leagues hence, by the edge of the forest, as you go to Beauvais?"

His companion nodded his head, and Caillet continued: "Well, when I was here last there was a good old simple man there, a priest, who was himself a serf by birth. He would be easily induced, not knowing that there was any other object, to offer up prayers for the comfort of the people. Nay, more, I am not sure that, when the first steps are taken, we may not manage to draw him to our cause. Nothing, however, must be said to him, in the beginning, but that the poor people of Beauvoisis do beseech him to offer prayers to Heaven for their deliverance from their enemies. Let Heaven judge, Thibalt, who those enemies are. The good priest will willingly consent, if he be there still, which I doubt not; and then many things can be done and said, when the people meet to join in his orisons. You yourself can call the best of them together—by the best I mean the wisest and the freest. Let them speak to the others, gradually preparing for after meetings; and before those come, you and I will be ready to take advantage of them. Shall it be so, Thibalt?"

"Exactly," answered the old man; "but here, Caillet, you will find us more prepared than you expect, more, doubtless, than in the south."

Caillet well understood that the last part of what the old man said was a trap intended to discover what was the state of preparation in other parts of France, rather than a mere abstract expression of belief; and he replied at once to his companion's thoughts: "Nay, nay, you are mistaken, Thibalt; the south is fully prepared.

too," he said; "but there is a reason why we must keep these men back. If the rising is to take place here first, our friends in the south must have due notice of the day and hour, in order that we may have their immediate support, and that they may have ours. If we attack our tyrants at all points at once, they will have no defence; but each will have to guard his own castle, and to fight for his own life and lands. Now, old Thibalt, now swear to me one thing—that thou wilt act in this with me, and by me, only."

"What is the use of an oath?" said the old man, with a cynical smile: "oaths are but wind, you know, Caillet."

"They are," answered Caillet, "they are, Thibalt; but we will put oath against oath. You swear to me what I require, and I will swear to you that this day six months, if I be then living and successful, I will count out to you five hundred golden pieces, such as you have now in your hand."

"Will you give it in writing, will you give it in writing?" demanded the miser. "If I get a scribe to put it down, will you make your mark thereunto?"

"I will do better," answered Caillet, "I will draw it up myself; it is better than employing any scribe."

"Ay, I forgot, I forgot," said the old man: "thou canst write, which is more than many of these lords can do: they taught me not that art; but perhaps, had it been otherwise, memory might not have served me so well as now she does: however, thou shalt put it down, good Caillet, thou shalt put it down. I will bring an inkhorn with me when I come again."

"And thou wilt swear then," added Caillet, "to act in this matter by my word alone, otherwise the agreement is of no avail. Mark that, my friend, and recollect such are the terms."

"I know, I know," he replied; "but thou shalt command, Caillet, thou shalt command in all things. Remember, five hundred gold pieces; it was five hundred that thou saidst."

"It was, it was," answered Caillet; "but what is that noise before the house? Look out, look out, good Thibalt."

"Nay, look thou out thyself," said the old man; but ere Caillet, with a glance of scorn, could stride to the door and open it, the goatherd Morne entered in haste,

and closing the creaking woodwork after him, exclaimed, "Out by the other side, Caillet, out by the other side! I have just seen a baron's banner coming through the wood, with a long train of men-at-arms behind. They stopped and gazed about them as if they knew not the way, and we may be sure they will halt here to inquire."

Notwithstanding the eagerness with which the swineherd spoke, Caillet paused for a moment in thought ere he followed his advice.

"There are many chances," he said, at length, "there are many chances that they draw no bridle here: the place looks quite deserted."

"But the old man's beast," cried the swineherd, sharply, "you forget that the old man's beast is at the door."

"True," answered Caillet in the same calm tone, "true, that might betray us. You two stay here, then. There is no risk for you; and you, good Morne, seek me as soon as they have passed on their way: you will find me in the rugged parts of the mountain under the rocks, where there is the little well, most likely. But here they are: I hear their horses' feet; bid them good day for me, if they inquire, and tell them I am gone;" and thus saying, with a sneering smile, he turned away and left his two companions in the hut, making his exit by a door in the back of the building, which had been originally formed to afford an easy communication with the styes for swine, a long range of which had formerly stood close behind the cottage. Those styes, however, had long been removed, and that part of the cottage which turned away from the road was covered with thick trees and underwood, through which a path led to some wilder and more mountainous spots in the forest, but rarely traversed by the foot of any human being.

Whether the indifference which Caillet had displayed on the approach of danger was real or assumed, and it may be very doubtful which was truly the case, it had its full effect upon his companions, who admired his calm self-possession just in proportion as they were themselves alarmed. They had, however, some need of forethought, for the troop of those whom they looked upon as their natural enemies was by this time at the door, and the minds of both turned instantly to devise some plausible cause which might be assigned for their being found together in that solitary place.

"Say that you have been pursued by a band of companions," said Morne.

"No, no," cried the other, "they would instantly set out to seek them, and find that I had lied. Nay, nay, tell them rather that I had lost my way, and came in here to ask it of you: are your swine far off?"

"Some quarter of a league," replied the man; but even as he spoke the door of the cottage opened, and a page, with his horse's bridle thrown over his left arm, broke in upon their conference.

END OF VOL. I.

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## CATALOGUE OF BOOKS.

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